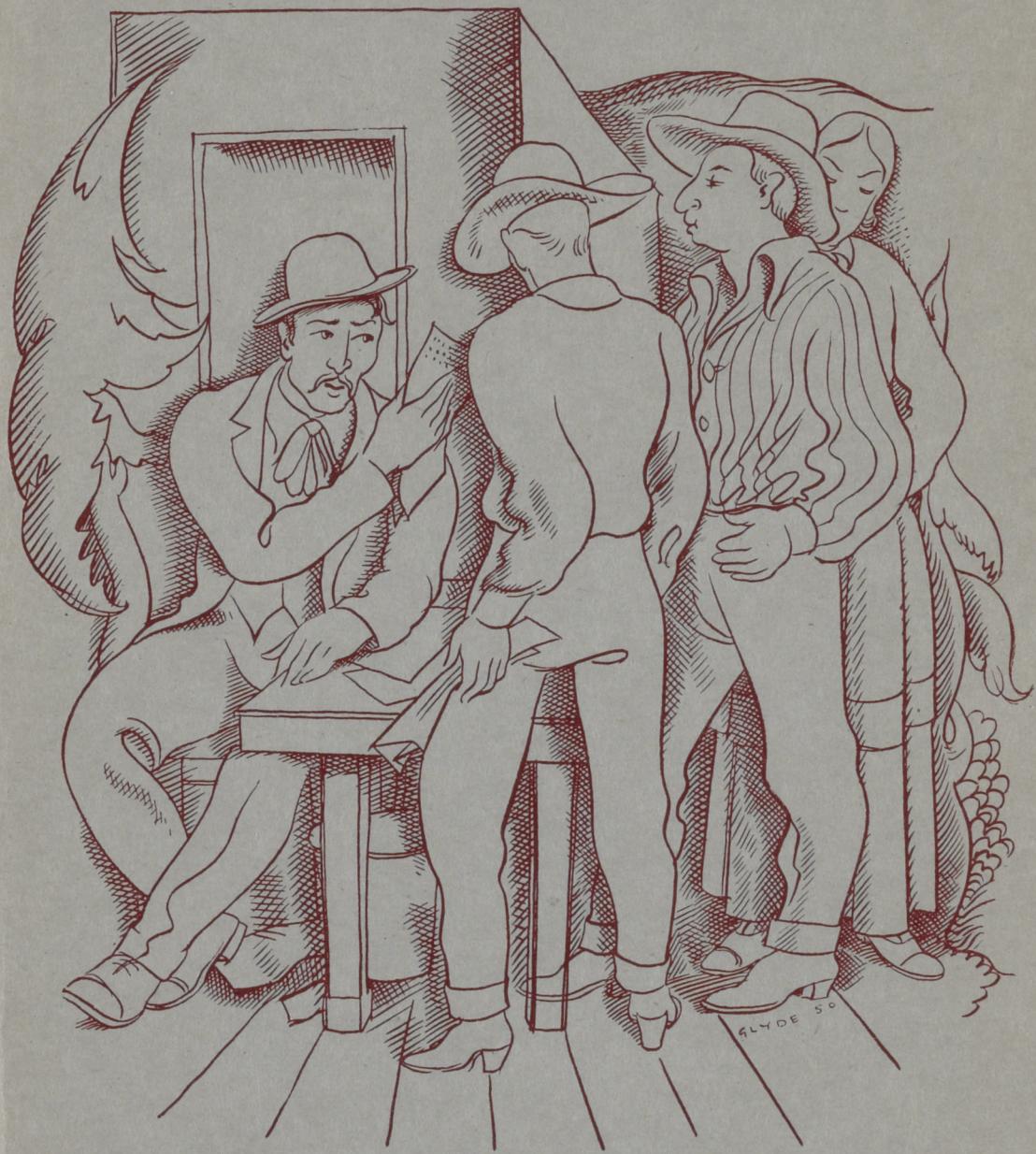


# WESTERN THEATRE

FESTIVAL NUMBER



Double Number — Winter and Spring, 1950 — 50 cents

Vol. 1 3/4

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# WESTERN CANADA THEATRE CONFERENCE

Eighth Annual Meeting, August 22nd and 23rd  
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## MONDAY, AUGUST 21st

8:00 p.m.—Executive Meeting, Legion Hall

## TUESDAY, AUGUST 22nd Legion Hall

9:00—Registration.

9:30—Welcome to Regina. Representative of Regina Little Theatre Society.

9:45—President's Address—George Werier, President, Western Canada Theatre Conference.

10:00—Secretary-Treasurer's Report—K. W. Gordon, Secretary-Treasurer, Western Canada Theatre Conference.

Reports from Official Provincial Representatives of new activities and undertakings in each of the four Western Provinces.

12:00—Luncheon as guests of the Saskatchewan Recreation Movement.

2:30—"Western Theatre"—"Today and Tomorrow". Robert Orchard, Department of Fine Arts, University of Alberta.

3:15—Rehabilitating Trained Theatre Workers in Canada—Esther Nelson, Department of Extension, University of Alberta.

4:00—Film Strip on Acting—Supplied by the Dominion Department of Health and Welfare.

5:30—A drive to the beautiful Qu'Appelle Valley and a picnic lunch at Fort Qu'Appelle.

## WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23rd Legion Hall

9:30—After thoughts on the D.D.F. and Plans for Next Year—R. MacDonald.

10:30—Is the Non-Competitive Festival Possible—Jessie Richardson, Vancouver Little Theatre Association.

12:00—Luncheon.

During the lunch interval provincial delegates will meet and elect their 3 executive members for each province.

2:00—Training for Drama Leadership—Mrs. Burton James, Seattle, Washington.

3:00—Report of the W.C.T.C. Playwriting Contest.

3:30—New or unfinished business.

4:00—Film "Prelude to Performance" produced by the London Little Theatre.

Film on Acting produced by the N.F.B. for the Department of National Health and Welfare.

6:30—Dinner as guests of the Regina Chamber of Commerce.

## THURSDAY, AUGUST 24th

9:30—Meeting of New Executive.

It is a new departure for the Conference to hold its annual meeting at any other place than Banff. Banff had several advantages (besides its famous recreational facilities), for the Conference was usually timed to coincide with the closing exercises of the Banff School of Fine Arts, the exhibition of painting, musical recitals and performances of plays. However, by holding the Conference in one or the other of the larger centres of the West, it is expected that it will be more within reach of the average theatre enthusiast—at least

those who live in or near the particular place in which it is being held. As it moves each year from place to place it should in short time become the rallying point for all the vital theatre work in the west. Its value will be in proportion to the support it receives from the many community theatre groups. A special advantage this year is the one week Drama Workshop (August 20th to 27th) for drama leaders of small centres, being conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Burton W. James of the Civic Repertory Playhouse, Seattle.

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FEBRUARY, 1948

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**DRAMA**—Initial grant to University Stage Society, repaid to the Board after the successful summer tour of 1948, which established the student players on a permanent basis.

**LITERATURE**—Comprehensive lists of recommended reading prepared by the Saskatchewan Library Association, published and widely circulated by the Board.

**HANDICRAFT**—A conference of 80 people, representing Saskatchewan interests in handicraft, called to assess the needs and plan development for handicraft in the rural areas, led by a distinguished authority from Quebec.

ENQUIRIES should be addressed to:  
The Secretary, Saskatchewan Arts Board,  
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## HOW THE ARTS BOARD FUNCTIONS

**PURPOSE**—The Saskatchewan Arts Board aims to provide cultural experience of various kinds for the people of Saskatchewan, particularly in the smaller centres. Consideration is given to the quality of these opportunities and the wishes of those participating.

**COMPOSITION**—The Board is chosen by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, and is made up of citizens from farm, labour and professional groups who are interested in the arts, with three members of the Department of Education including the executive secretary. By an Act of the Legislature passed in March, 1949, the Board is empowered to hold and administer its own funds.

**POLICY**—The Board endeavours to work closely with all national and provincial organizations concerned with the well-being of Canadians. The Board practises the democratic principle of seeking the contribution of each citizen. In this way everyone concerned has an opportunity of helping to plan and carry out more effectively, the Board's programme for the community.

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### **DRAMA IS FUN**

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# WESTERN THEATRE

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The editors will be glad to receive news of theatre events in western Canada and articles on general or practical topics, especially from members of active theatre groups, teachers and students. Photos, drawings, set and costume designs are particularly welcome, also letters containing news or criticism, whether intended for publication or not.

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Editorial and Business Office: Department of Fine Arts, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.



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Winter-Spring, 1950

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**BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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Dorothy Somerset

Published quarterly under the auspices of the University of Alberta and dedicated to the promotion of school, community and professional theatre in Western Canada.

*from the  
editor*

## The Festival Idea

With the Dominion Drama Festival so much in evidence in these parts it is inevitable that a good deal of our space should be devoted to it. In order not to crowd out the local news and the more general subjects, we have made this a double number—which also helps us to catch up on our schedule.

We shall not be at all surprised if the week of the Festival gives occasion for a great deal of discussion on the merits and demerits of the Festival itself. As the regional adjudicator wended his controversial way across Canada, we noticed a growing sense of dissatisfaction directed as much at the whole business of competition and adjudication as at more transient problems. The governors' court will of course be the chief place in which these feelings should be aired, because the Dominion Drama Festival is in no sense an organization imposed on the theatre people of Canada. It is composed of those theatre people themselves. If they do not like it, it is theirs to change or abolish. It certainly does not exist for the amusement of its hard-working executive committee, whose chief aim is to carry out the wishes of the governors, yet in so doing run into far more than their normal share of criticism.

The idea of the Festival was imported from England where similar festivals have been conducted for many years by such national bodies as the British Drama League. It was tailored to fit our Canadian conditions at a time when our theatre was quite nebulous in a national sense. It can be given credit for having done much in the successive years to foster a national awareness of theatre, and to promote a steady development in the quantity and quality of the work displayed.

We now, however, have to ask ourselves if it meets present requirements or is merely defeating its own end. Will the great expense involved in participating, along with the strain of public adjudication, cause more and more of our better groups to confine themselves to their own urgent problems? Yet, should the Festival continue to meet with their whole hearted support as well as that of the public, there would seem to be every justification for continuing it as it is. Undoubtedly it publicizes the theatre in Canada in a far better way than anything yet devised. It gives great encouragement to those skilled enough or fortunate enough to be chosen; and provides an invaluable interchange of ideas from all over the country.

What are the alternatives? The Edmonton Journal in a recent editorial has put forward two of them. "The first", it said, "is to retain competition among the best as the primary aim but to extend the number of entries in the finals, and thus the length of the festival. This might increase the chances of all or most of the zones being represented, though it would not necessarily do so if the calibre of productions varied widely in different zones.

"The second is to retain the competitive element only in the regional events and drop it entirely from the final event, thus making the latter simply a display of the best play for each zone. This would still require extending the final festival to about a week and a half; whether that would be feasible, we do not know".

We would like to add two other possibilities.

The elimination of a final adjudicator would help to cut down the expense, and further saving could be made if the regional adjudicator was eliminated too. Each region would then be responsible for choosing its own entry, and this could be done by the votes of a jury of seven, appointed by the regional drama league and attending the regional festival. The results would likely be as satisfactory to all concerned as any individual judgement no matter how competent. For we must seriously ask ourselves whether the public adjudication, however much it may entertain the audience, is not only unnecessary but undesirable. Hasty words and judgements, based as readily on natural human limitations as on human wisdom, can hardly be reconciled with the maturity and easy dignity required of a national festival. Is there not perhaps something adolescent about the whole idea?

The most radical alternative that occurs to us would be the virtual elimination of the Festival as it now stands and its substitution by one based on invitation only. It could be a one, or even two week, festival of plays contributed by six of Canada's leading groups, these groups to be chosen by the governors' court the year before. They would first have to be elected to a roster, from which the annual selections would be made in rotation. Election would be achieved on the basis of the quality of their work over a period of years. Having received their invitation to participate a full year before doing so, and having chosen their play with special reference to the festival, they would be in a position to put forward their very best work. Participation would be a joy and an honor, rather than a hazard.

Such a festival would more readily earn the title of "showcase for the best Canadian talent" than what we have now. Undoubtedly the Festival has come to cater more and more to these groups in recent years, and if such is the purpose of the Festival it would be just as well to forget the competitive element.

The Festival has at any rate ceased to stimulate the smaller groups, as it did in its first years. That duty has now devolved on the regions. In the West we have become very much aware of the need for local festivals, for the most part non-competitive, to arouse and sustain the enthusiasm of those who feel the Dominion Drama Festival is beyond their reach.

\* \* \*

We are planning for the next issue of *WESTERN THEATRE* a special section on "Children's Theatre" with contributions by well-known authorities. Following up the present number's playwriting symposium will be a survey of worthwhile Canadian plays, many of which we hope will find their way into production during the coming winter. We are anticipating some interesting replies to our discussion on dramatics in education, and these we hope to be able to publish. The Calgary festival will be summed up from various angles by several commentators, and there will be the usual sections on local events, book reviews and practical matters.

*WESTERN THEATRE* is particularly anxious to hear from people who are willing to act as local agents for sending us information and pushing sales in their own community. It is the personal exchange of dollar for receipt that is going to make all the difference to our future. If you are a frustrated actor, director or playwright, you can at least become a successful promoter for a theatre magazine.

# Playwriting In Western Canada

A little while ago WESTERN THEATRE conducted a survey of opinion on Playwriting in the West. It then invited Elsie Park Gowan and Gwen Pharis Ringwood to join the editor as a committee to consider the answers to a questionnaire that had been sent out to playwrights and directors. They have attempted to sum it all up in three sections, each committee member being responsible for a section. They wish to emphasize that the survey is far from being exhaustive both as to the people contacted and the problems discussed. A number of directors and playwrights living in the West will wonder why they were not contacted; will they please accept our apologies. It was impossible to contact all eligible people in the short time available. This discussion does not, therefore, pretend to sum up opinion in this part of the world. It merely publicises some opinions in the hope that they will prove thought-provoking and helpful. We wish to thank very much all those who took part. In many cases it was obvious that the contributor had taken a great deal of thought and trouble over his or her replies. We wish there was space to quote them much more extensively. But we hope we have indicated that they were often pungent and provocative, and generally very much to the point.

The contributors were:

Mary-Ellen Burgess  
Muriel Clements  
Anne Flavelle  
Jessie Forster  
Phoebe Smith

Dorothy Somerset  
Eric Candy  
Ian Dobbie  
R. K. Gordon  
E. M. Jones  
A. F. Key

## THEMES

(The questions dealt with value of plays about the west, the west as subject matter, criticism of such plays already written.)

The regional play, it is generally agreed, has value only if it has the impact of truth, if it possesses a universality of appeal. Plays about Western Canadian themes will not endure unless the playwright discovers in those themes some universal significance, and is able to clothe the theme in a dramatic guise. A. F. Key feels that "we must encourage writers to consider regional themes in the hope that, sooner or later, a mature work—truly creative and universal—will be developed." And Mrs. Forster agrees with Mr. Key: "Our Canadian West is rich in deeds of adventure, daring and exploration. Our forefathers paved the way for us. They set a culture pattern for us and it is our obligation to further that pattern. We should never be allowed to forget their courage, their resourcefulness, their great tenacity of purpose. This heritage should live on in the theatre as well as in the novel."

However a distinct distaste for the play that is "folksy"—that is "provincial", limited, bent on exploring unimportant legend or exploiting quaintness and "local color" was evidenced in the replies. Everyone felt that the play must be a good play, that we should expect our western plays to stand up against plays from anywhere. Eric Candy says: "A writer, I have been told, writes best what he knows best. This would imply that a western writer would write best about a western atmosphere and locale. Dorothy Somerset says: "I question the emphasis on western themes. I think it should be on plays by western playwrights, leaving them free to

develop any themes. I do not think you can successfully force an interest in a particular theme, without leading to mechanical unimaginative results. In fact I should be inclined to place emphasis on **Canadian** playwrights, but make a special effort in the West to encourage our Canadian playwrights who happen to live here."

Professor Jones writes: "A good play about the west dealing with contemporary life, the past, or legend and fantasy, would be just as valuable as any good play dealing with these things in any other part of the world; and bad western plays on these topics would be just as bad as any other bad plays. As a director, I particularly want scripts on western subjects. I will take good plays on any subject as long as the plays are interesting and suitable . . . there seems to be a preference among our audiences for comedy and melodrama. We prefer full length plays and where possible a cast of from six to eight people, no more than ten."

From Saskatchewan Professor Gordon raises an interesting point: "What is a Western play anyway? Must it have lumbermen in plaid shirts, mounted policemen, prospectors, remittance men to make it Western. A large per cent of our Western people are ordinary town or village folk living fairly ordinary lives. They might have plays written around their hopes and fears and loves and disappointments and ambitions. I entered quite a good play by a Saskatoon playwright in our Provincial Festival, a farce fantasy of a stenographer's dreams which was Western but also universal. I think we could have more plays of this type . . . I would also like to see modern farm problems discussed in dramatic form—some of the discussions on the Farm Forum programs might be elaborated into subject matter for excellent stage plays."

And so we have it: the consensus of opinion being that western playwrights must produce plays that are interesting and dramatic anywhere in the world, that the choice of subject matter is the playwright's business, that regional plays and plays dealing with the historic past are of value only if they have some universal significance or appeal. After all the pleasure in writing is to try to impart something that has touched the imagination, fired the playwright's interest in the people or subject involved. Let the playwright look for such stimulus wherever he chooses. However it is often true that plays with roots that are deep in the life of a region possess some special quality of strength and truth which are lacking in plays that do not explore or develop the environmental factors surrounding the action. And certainly good regional plays derive color, vitality, interest from their very regionalism.

Mr. Key has shown himself most in sympathy with the regional movement: "Some day when our Western Canadian culture has jelled, a significant play will be written. At the moment, few, if any plays bearing a regional theme can be considered as anything more than a striving to interpret our Western way of life. Possibly we are not yet sufficiently objective in our approach to the west. Certainly, we have yet to acquire a true perspective. The colorful figures of Bob Edwards, Pat Burns et al can hardly be evaluated at close range. We are apt either to glamorize these people or present them as persons rather than as a reflection of the environment through which they moved. Certainly one can find much in legend, in our brief history, or in our contemporary life around which to build a significant plot. The Western plays we have as a general rule fall into two categories—farcical or highly dramatic (near melodrama.)" Criticisms of Western

plays were mostly for lack of genuine dramatic qualities—for being too pedestrian, forced or self-conscious. The dialogue was often awkward, lacking innate rhythms of natural speech. One director says "they are fanciful and unreal," another says: "Writers are more interested in being Western than in being good writers" and still another says, "By and large the plays are just not good enough." Unquestionably our craftsmanship is unsatisfactory. We are not disciplined enough.

In discussing the material the committee came to the conclusion that we don't want to stimulate an artificial self-conscious folk movement in the west, we do want to arouse interest in our own legend, history, tradition and daily life. Just as Canadian painters are trying to open our eyes to Canadian scenes so can Canadian drama enrich our understanding of our time and place. This dramatic interpretation should take a variety of forms. It tends to restrict itself to the naturalistic, the purely realistic. If we cling to this through laziness, lack of enterprise or imagination, we shall find ourselves out of date in respect to the trend in other parts of the world, which is away from naturalism and towards a more frank theatricalism.

One problem for the playwright here is that the dramatist must look for his material directly—there is no body of history, legend and story on which to draw. As a rule the dramatist of the past has preferred to find his material already digested, thrown into some artistic shape, or at least to have had the poets, historians and novelists already point out a host of ways in which history or contemporary life can be moulded into art. The dramatist likes to be able to concentrate mainly on expressing previously digested material in terms of the stage (that is of the actor). This was true of the Age of Greece and Rome, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Ibsen was the great innovator in going directly to the life around him. And this is what the Canadian playwright has to do. As with Ibsen this direct approach leads more easily to naturalistic or realistic interpretations. It is more difficult to arrive at a poetic or heroic interpretation when the greater part of our material must be gathered first hand.

Let us remember that the playwright is a story teller—after all he is nothing more than that—but as a story teller he must make his tales vital, compelling, illuminating—and if he does not make them so, he will have no one to listen. If we get back to the playwright's function as story teller we will perhaps shed much outworn gear, some of the heavy, ornate trappings of the stage, and return to the clean line, the sharp thrust of a rising action, the explosive brilliant climax and the satisfactory denouement of the well told tale.

—Gwen Pharis Ringwood

\* \* \*

## TECHNIQUES

(The questions dealt with preferences for naturalistic techniques or theatrical techniques; interest in experimentation.)

The main question is whether or not we have clung too long to old fashioned naturalism in the setting of our plays; whether we are ready to give the plays great vigour and scope, to make them easier to stage in the kind of halls we work in, by a frank appeal to the imagination of the audience in a more theatrical technique.

Mr. Orchard sums up the argument against too much dependence on the scenery when he writes: "Naturalistic plays were originally designed for theatres such as found in London or New York—with great technical advantages in staging, where lighting, paint and careful construction could give a proper illusion of reality. Our stages in the West cannot do this. Cardboard windows pinned on curtains will not do more than suggest what they are meant to represent; and if the play is naturalistic, the crudity and falsity of the set is only emphasized. But if the play is frankly theatrical, and the audience asked to use its imagination both as to setting and acting, an artistically arranged cardboard window would by no means be out of place. Could we write plays that depend almost entirely on the actor and place little or no reliance on lights and sets? Moliere and the Elizabethans had to write for circumstances not at all unlike our own, and they wrote just such plays. The Elizabethans in particular, gave very often a sense of the sweep and bigness of life . . . "Panoramic plays" we might call them.

"A great deal of what is waiting to be expressed in our own country cannot be laid in a street, public square, or within the walls of a house. The citified, middle-class well-made play is too limited for us. Mountain tops, river banks, dusty roads, backyards are some of the places we need to set our scenes. "Another part of the Island" (or the forest) is the sort of stage direction that belongs as much to us as it did to Shakespeare. It would be ridiculous to try for an illusion of reality. Leave reality to the movies and write so that the actor can "carry the scene with him" . . . as the saying goes.

Much of this is sound sense, and stimulating. I think, however, it is nonsense to expect Canadians to write in a technique they have had so little chance to see and know. Beginning to write, we imitate what we admire; but to admire it, we must see it first. (My own first half-hour was patterned uncannily close to O'Neil's *Ile!*) I agree with Professor Jones when he answers that too many of our playwrights try to be startlingly original without mastering the craft of playmaking, "with results that are usually more silly than useful".

Let's face it, playwriting follows play production. Shakespeare was working in a nest of singing birds, not chirping in a hockey-minded town on the short grass plains. If imaginative leaders like Robert Orchard want us to break out of our Belasco box seats, they have a lot of educating to do, in showing directors and playwrights what this "actor-centred" theatre is all about.

Mr. Orchard is alive to this problem when he writes: "One of the steps forward will be the growth all over the country of regional professional touring companies. They will want plays that are easy to stage . . . scenery that can be easily suggested or painted by word and action . . . plays with small casts, that lend themselves to vivid imaginative acting. This will show the amateur groups what can be done by this style of staging".

Because we don't know any better, we produce and write plays calling for the technical equipment of large professional theatres. No wonder then, say the exponents of theatric playmaking, that the movies beat our "little" theatres hollow on their own ground. The answer is, they say, SHIFT THE GROUND. "Concentrate on the live actor and what he can do. In the film the actor is a mere puppet at the mercy of the editor. The special fascination of the stage is the re-creation at each performance of human situations in

terms of live people moving and speaking in front of us. As soon as our dramatists write vividly and excitingly for actors; as soon as our actors learn once more to act vividly and excitingly (not half-ashamedly, which is what they mean when they say they are acting 'naturally') then the theatre will begin to appeal to the public once again as a form of recreation—as an emotional and intellectual outlet . . . in other words as a popular art."

My hunch is that this is mainly a question of temperament. What is exciting to one may be artificial, mannered and irritating to another. Poetic spirits with the Paul Bunyan approach to the west will plump for the mountain tops. More down-to-earth souls will find tragedy and laughter in a farm kitchen. We may have the wide open spaces in our hearts, but us westerners do experience our moments of dramatic crisis "in a street, public square, or within the walls of a house". Surely the mould in which a play finds shape is determined by the writer's type of mind and his approach to his subject.

Most of us will agree we have too many horrible little box sets rivetted into our rural stages. There have been too many pictures pinned on drapes "to make it look like a room." But between the extremes of photographic realism and bare-boards-acting, there is surely the practical middle way of **selective realism**. And selective realism is the right line with such oft-chosen scripts as "The Rainmaker", "To Meet the Chinooks", "Final Edition", or "Marie Jenvrin".

Summing up the answers in this section, the over-all tone was a challenge to more freedom and vigour. "We're not lifting the heart out of the west" said Saskatchewan, "and telling it in terms of greatness". What's needed is evident . . . more theatre. More theatre, out of which our plays will grow.

\* \* \*

### For theatric plays

Plays which can be performed independently of scenery would have a terrific appeal, as many stages in Western Canada are inadequate and many casts have great difficulty securing the necessary furniture and sets. I think all playwrights should keep this in mind and try whenever possible to write a play that does not depend on scenery. This might teach us to write stronger plays than if we depend too much on props and scenery. (Flavelle)

\* \* \*

I do feel that playwrights might visualise the rural school-house when writing. There should be a vast field for plays which could be simply produced on a 12 x 16 stage with no drop curtain, a 60-watt overhead light and other limited facilities. We must adapt ourselves to our environment and, much as the Mummers trooped England, so could our actors troop the western plains with simple productions, sans scenery and props. (Key)

\* \* \*

### For naturalistic plays

I am a realist and I believe the average audience generally prefers a play that is non-illusory. But I certainly think our playwrights should break new ground. If they do so they must realize that the average theatre group does not wish to take time on experimental plays and those type of plays could only be produced by workshops or private groups in most cases. My

general criticism of some western plays is that they are too fanciful and unreal and in some cases perhaps not identified sufficiently with the actual life of the majority of people on our prairies. (Gordon)

On the whole, our tour audiences prefer representational plays. At the university itself, we are interested in both techniques. But I think it would be better for our less experienced playwrights to stick to the more orthodox forms until they master their trade. Too many beginning playwrights scorn the useful rules of ordinary dramaturgy, and feel that they must startle the world with unusual forms or subjects, with results that are usually more silly than useful. (Jones)

—Elsie Park Gowan

## ENCOURAGEMENT

(The questions dealt mainly with the topics indicated in the subheadings.)

### 1. Playwright and Group Co-operation

Everyone is agreed that a playwright needs to work as closely as possible with some producing group. It is also the duty of all well-established groups to present plays by Canadian writers at least once a year. But in this connection an important point was made by several people, "I should like", says Mrs. Forster, "to see new work in experienced hands. It has seemed sometimes as though the blind were leading the blind." It often happens that Canadian plays are given to the most inexperienced members of the group to perform, whereas new plays require the most careful and skilled consideration from both actors and director. Of course, a group will not as a rule want to risk a major production on an untried play, but all serious groups should regard the production of Canadian plays as a duty both to themselves and to the cause of Canadian Theatre, and such production should be at least in the hands of the most experienced members—although the production be on a small scale and for a limited audience—in other words a senior workshop for the most conscientious members.

Undoubtedly the best thing that can happen to a Canadian playwright will be performance of his work by a professional Canadian group—particularly if it travels around the country making Canadian playwrights known over a wide area.

### 2. Distribution

Practically all directors said they have difficulty in getting hold of Canadian scripts. Playwrights have no time to type numbers of copies, and they cannot afford to have them printed. "There should be some central agency," says Miss Flavelle, "which could mimeograph copies of the better Western Canadian plays and distribute them to high school teachers and others on request. Some type of catalogue would have to be prepared, listing the plays which are available and giving an outline of them."

While the mimeographing of plays is a help, by far the most important thing is to get plays printed. Emerys Jones' collection "Canadian School Plays" (published by Ryerson Press, \$1.40) is a case in point; these plays are now becoming known in a way they never were before. Professor Jones himself says: "It might help if more of the best Western Canadian scripts were published in properly printed collections. Many theatre groups, particularly the less experienced ones, are inclined to judge the quality of a play by its printed appearance and look upon a mimeographed play as something not worthy of proper printing and, therefore, not worthy

of production." And one of our best known and most often produced playwrights say quite simply: "Nobody stands howling on my doorsteps for a new play. I feel my plays might be used more if I could get them published in a book."

### 3. Playwriting Competitions

The Western Canada Theatre Conferences Playwriting Competition is praised by some, whereas others feel that the results have so far been a little disappointing. Professor Jones believes that, while it is good as far as it goes, "it would be improved if larger prizes could be offered and the best plays published in book form. Our touring theatre organization might consider offering prizes as high as \$400.00 or \$500.00 for any full-length original play it would choose to produce on tour. If other similar touring groups could be established, there is no reason why a number of really worthwhile prizes could not be given." (The London Little Theatre is offering a prize of \$1,000.00 for a full-length play by a Canadian—see page 2.)

Established playwrights such as Mrs. Gowan and Mrs. Ringwood are critical of tying up their plays to the W.C.T.C. for two years for non-royalty production. "If they're worth doing, let the playwright gain something from them. Moreover, once they've gone out as non-royalty it is difficult to get them back on a royalty basis," which is a handicap to publication.

### 4. Festivals

A few years ago the Dominion Drama Festival was a showcase for Canadian plays; now, with the emphasis on full-length plays, it is not. It is felt that local or regional festivals could be some help, particularly "a western drama festival using none but 'western' scripts," as Professor Jones suggests. One should perhaps broaden this to include Canadian plays generally. Mrs. Burgess makes the interesting point that "many groups watch the papers for reports of plays in drama festivals, and write at once to borrow copies of winning plays."

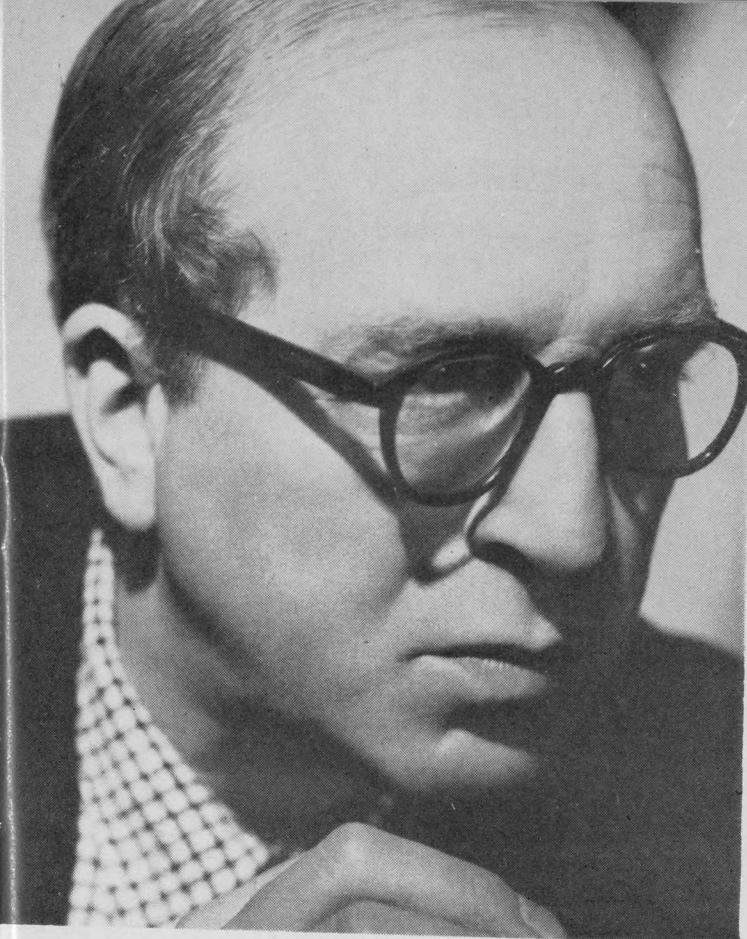
### 5. Schools

There are two aspects: the value of schools to Canadian playwriting; and the value of Canadian playwriting to schools. With regard to the latter, plays dealing with Canadian life and legend can be correlated with other school activities—social studies, etc. They demonstrate to the children ways in which the life around them can be expressed. Schools are crying out for suitable plays and our best playwrights are not entering this field since there is no profit in it. The problem is how to make it worthwhile for playwrights. One way would be to have grants and fellowships for proven writers to write special plays for schools. After all, Departments of Education will finance radio writers to write special school broadcasts.

\* \* \*

In conclusion, let us put the whole matter of playwriting into its proper perspective by reminding ourselves that the state of playwriting has always depended on the state of the theatre itself. Only a vital and reasonably popular theatre can produce significant playwriting. Even the greatest playwrights cannot be considered as having brought into being the theatre of their time. It has always been the other way round. Their works are the food on which an already living organism must thrive. Their importance often stems from the degree of cultivation they receive at the hands of that organism.

—Robert Orchard



MICHEL  
SAINT  
DENIS

John Vickers

**DOMINION  
DRAMA FESTIVAL**

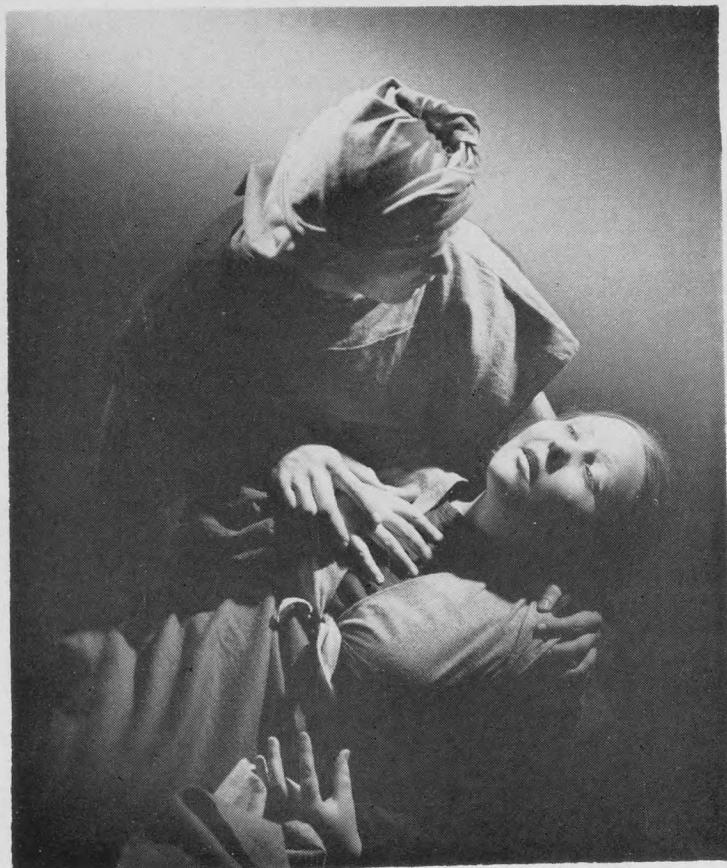
**CALGARY**



**MAY 8th to 13th**

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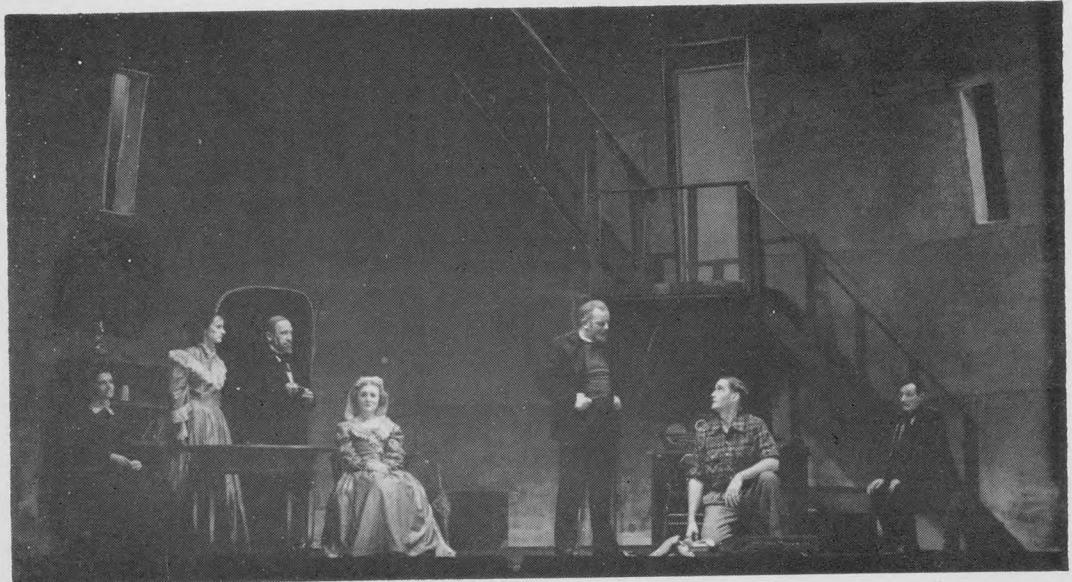


"Noah", Everyman  
Theatre, Vancouver.

**Below:** "Thunder Rock",  
London Little Theatre.

Eric Skipsey

Norfolk, London





"Our Town", Brockville  
Theatre Guild.



"Awake and Sing"  
Belmont Group Theatre,  
Toronto.

Robert Mucklestone



"L'Avare",  
Le Cercle Moliere,  
St. Boniface, Man.



The cast of  
"Present Laughter",  
Canadian Legion  
Players, Regina.

Montague and Heenan



Workshop 14  
("The Rivals")  
redecorating their  
new headquarters.



The cast of "Quand le  
Chat n'est pas Là", Le  
Conservatoire National de  
Musique, Quebec.

Studio Roger Bedard

# The Adjudicator

## MICHEL SAINT DENNIS

Born at Beauvais, September 13, 1897.

Educated at the College Rollin, Paris and the Lycee Hoche, Versailles.

**1916-1920**—With the French Army, Chasseurs Alpins. After the Armistice, with L'Infanterie Coloniale in the Army of Occupation.

**1924-1929**—With Jacques Copeau in Burgundy, founded the company of Les Copiaus. Also toured Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland and England.

**1929-1934**—Founded and directed "La Campagnie des Quinze".

**1934-1939**—Worked in London. Founded the London Theatre Studio. Produced on the London stage: *Noah* by Andre Obey; *Sowers of the Hills* by Jean Giono; *The Witch of Edmonton* by Dekker and Rowley; *Macbeth*; *The Three Sisters* by Tchekhov; *Marriage of Blood* by Lorca; *The White Guard* by Bulgakov; *Twelfth Night*; and *Weep for the Spring* by Stephen Haggard.

**1939**—Called up in the French Army. Returned to England at Dunkirk.

**July, 1940**—Head of French program section of BBC, under the name of Jacques Duchesne.

**1944-1945**—Founded the English Radio Section in Paris at the Radiodiffusion francaise.

**1945**—Produced Yeats version of Sophocles' Oedipus for the Old Vic Company.

**1946**—Founded and is General Director of the Old Vic Theatre Centre.

**1949**—Produced Turgenev's *A Month in the Country* for the Old Vic Theatre Company.

Michel Saint Denis has had an outstanding career as actor, playwright, director and producer and is presently director of the Old Vic Theatre School in London, England. He began his career as private secretary to Jacques Copeau (his uncle by marriage) at the Theatre du Vieux-Colombier, Paris, where he subsequently became stage manager, director and assistant producer. In 1930 he founded and was director and producer for La Compagnie des Quinze. He is a brilliant representative of the modern French Theatre trained in the school of Jacques Copeau.

In 1935 he established the London Theatre Studio (Le Theatre Ecole) and since that time has acted in and produced many plays at the New Theatre, Phoenix, Savoy and Old Vic including "Noah", "Macbeth", "Twelfth Night", the "Electra" of Sophocles and the "Alcestis" of Euripides. M. Saint Denis has capped a successful career in the French and English theatre by the excellence of his work at the Old Vic.

M. Saint Denis will be remembered by many Canadians as adjudicator for the final festival in Ottawa in 1937. He will be in a position to judge and comment upon the growth of the theatre and festival movement in Canada since he was here last.

John Gielgud, in his book "Early Stages", writes of Saint Denis (who directed him in the English version of "Noah" and Tchekhov's "Three Sisters") that he "is never entirely satisfied with his productions, but his criticism is neither destructive nor personal, like that of so many lesser producers. He is extremely patient, quite inexhaustible, and demands that one shall concentrate and labor unceasingly, as he does himself . . . I know that I learned more from acting in these two plays than from others in which I have made a greater personal success. It is an education and a delight to watch Michel's rehearsals, and his brilliant talents entitle him to the devotion he inspires in all those who have the good fortune to work with him."

\* \* \*

The name of **Jacques Copeau** has inevitably been mentioned in the foregoing notes. To many Canadians he is no more than a name, although if there is one man who can be said to be the founder and inspiration of the modern French Theatre, that man is Copeau.

In the year 1913, revolting against the decadence of the Paris stage, he and a group of friends founded the Theatre du Vieux-Colombier. In doing so they returned to the truest tradition of the theatre as practised by Shakespeare and Moliere, traditions which had been debased alike by the cynical commercialization of the ordinary theatres and the shoddy subservience to lifeless conventions exhibited by La Comedie Francaise. In the words of Copeau himself, the Vieux-Colombier set out to be "the rallying place of all those authors, actors, spectators, who are tormented by the need of restoring beauty to the stage."

After the first world war this theatre was remodelled and given its famous bare cement stage and permanent setting, inspired by the fixed yet flexible arrangement belonging to the Elizabethan playhouse.

Copeau was himself an actor and dramatist of note, but he was particularly inspired as a teacher. He came more and more to give his attention to the school he had founded, until weary of frustrations and financial worries he retired with a band of faithful pupils to a remote part of Burgundy. From this group sprang the Compagnie des Quinze, for whom Andre Obey wrote his "Noah". Michel Saint Denis directed it.

Copeau's chief importance lies in his tremendous influence on other people. Writes Marcel Raymond: "His lesson, spoken apparently in the wilderness, has been heard, considered and applied." Among the many dramatists coming under this influence are: Gheon, Claudel, Obey, and Giraudoux; among the many actors: Jouvet, Dullin (co-founders with Copeau of the Vieux-Colombier), Pierre Fresnay and Suzanne Bing who created the roles of "Noah" and "Mrs. Noah". "Above all a vast number of troupes have been formed anxious to carry out the work of purification set in motion by the Vieux-Colombier, to discover new authors, and let in the light. In September, 1939, there were two hundred such."\* (And among them can be counted Canada's well-known professional group, Les Compagnons de Saint-Laurent).

Copeau died very recently. He is considered by many to be the greatest name in the modern French theatre.

\*Marcel Raymond, "Le Jeu Retrouve" (Editions de L'Arbre, Montreal). It is regrettable that there are still no adequate accounts in English of Copeau and his followers. Mr. Raymond's excellent book is recommended to all who read French.

# The Competitors

Monday, May 8th

THUNDER ROCK

London Little Theatre

The London Little Theatre is now in its 16th season. Before 1934 there were four amateur groups operating in London with some artistic, but little financial, success. The four groups decided to amalgamate under one business head.

The policy of the London Little Theatre is controlled by an executive of 16 members. The slate is presented at the annual meeting, when it is either adopted in whole or additional nominations are made from the floor. The president, secretary, treasurer, etc., are appointed from the executive body by the executives themselves. Our Board of Directors is largely composed of people who do not produce or act. However, amongst its members the acting and producing bodies are represented.

At first we did five productions a year at a subscription of \$3.00 per year. In 1945 we increased the number of productions to six and the price to \$4.00. Since the end of our first season we have had a closed membership and on no condition sell tickets of admission to a single performance. In 1948 the membership was raised to \$5.00 for six productions.

We have always handled our ticket sale on a team system. We have six teams with a captain at the head and with an average of twelve to a team. The captain is responsible to the office for all sales made by his team. We give one bonus, or free, ticket for every ten sold by the canvasser. We try to pick our captains from various walks of life and see that the canvassers come from different localities and have varied connections. Our membership in 1934-35 when the amalgamation first took place was a little over 800 and has grown steadily to its present size of 10,600 by hard work.

We have a Producers Board of about eighteen. Half of these are Seniors who direct the productions for our Subscription Season. The other half are Juniors who act as assistants to the Seniors and direct Studio Productions until they are ready to graduate to a senior position. We have no paid Producers, with the exception of an occasional visiting professional. All our work is voluntary with the exception of the Theatre Manager, the Executive Secretary, and their clerical and maintenance staffs. We engaged our first full time employee when we bought the Grand Theatre in July 1945.

When the Grand Theatre came on the market shortly before we purchased it, although we had a considerable sum saved for such a purpose, we did not have nearly enough. We therefore launched a Building Fund Campaign and, with the help of a number of influential business men who felt the importance of the position of the L.L.T. in the community, were able to raise enough money to put through the deal, leaving us a comparatively small mortgage which we hope to be able to pay off gradually in the next few years. The campaign was directed almost entirely to our own membership and the amounts collected ranged from \$1,000.00 to \$1.00 and came in from a surprising number of people.

As we only need the theatre for a small proportion of the year for our own amateur productions, we rent it at a nominal rental to any community organization. We have also a number of professional road shows and have

recently gained some publicity as having been chosen for the North American premiere of John Gielgud's company and the Dublin Gate Theatre.

We stress, very strongly, that the L.L.T. is not a "closed corporation". Any one who wishes to work with us is welcome, regardless of creed or color.

\* \* \*

"Thunder Rock", produced and directed by Doris Isard, is one of the most unusual plays in the long history of London Little Theatre productions. The set—a towering lighthouse with its revolving light which gives the necessary cold, eerie and authentic air to the play—was designed by Maridon Miller and built in The London Little Theatre Workshop under the supervision of E. S. Detwiler by N. A. King and Joseph LeMaire. This is probably the most ambitious project yet undertaken in the London Little Theatre Workshop.

Doris Isard (Mrs. C. E. Isard in private life) is one of The London Little Theatre's most gifted actresses and in the past few years has played in a number of London Little Theatre successes. Mrs. Isard has produced that gay, light, frothy comedy "Dear Ruth" on the London Little Theatre subscription series and this season turned her talents as the imaginative producer of the entirely different type of theatre when she brought to the boards "Thunder Rock".

## Tuesday, May 9th

### QUAND LE CHAT N'EST PAS LA

Le Conservatoire National de Musique

Le Conservatoire National de Musique de Quebec was founded in 1930 by a doctor of medicine who liked to play the cornet, and who had organized a children's band while he was a medical student in 1908: Dr. D. O. Dussault. At first the conservatory was a choral group, and the young singers produced an opera a year for the first three years. Their production of Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet" in 1932, in which the tenor Raoul Jobin began his career, was performed before Lord Bessborough. At this stage of the conservatory's existence, Dr. Dussault realized that it was not enough to have good singers to perform opera: good acting was also necessary. So in 1932 he founded a dramatic section in order to give his singers acting experience. At that time there was no other troupe of the kind in Quebec, and the conservatory attracted keen young actors who were anxious to study. The operatic section and the dramatic section worked in collaboration. The following year the conservatory dramatic group won first place in the first drama festival in Quebec City, competing with twelve other groups; in 1935 it won the French trophy at the festival in Ottawa; and in 1936 the best French actor award went to M. Rene Arthur, one of the group.

Hundreds of young people have been trained at the conservatory, and several are now outstanding in the provincial scene, including Mme. Marthe Lapointe, star of the Montreal Varieties Lyriques. Most conservatory graduates are employed in radio work, especially in the C.B.C.

For the last two years the conservatory's activities have been limited because of lack of funds. The Quebec public, says Dr. Dussault, encourages outside groups, but is apathetic towards its local talent, although the local press reiterates that the conservatory's plays are as good as the best given by outsiders.

The conservatory is to present a comedy at the drama festival this year: "Quand le chat n'est pas la" ("When the Cat's Away"), by the young and successful French author, Paul Vandenberghe, who left Paris for Canada in 1948 to write film dialogue. The director is Dr. Dussault, and the cast includes Mrs. Annette Leclerc (who won best actress award in the Quebec regional festival) and Rober Lebel (regional best actor).

## Wednesday, May 10th—Matinee

NOAH

Everyman Theatre

When The Everyman Theatre was founded in 1946 it planned for the first few years to devote most of each season to long tours in Western Canada while it slowly built up audiences and a permanent home, including a theatre in Vancouver. The ultimate goal would be to spend a part of each season on the road and the rest of the year preparing and playing new productions at home. Our first tour, November '46 to May '47, across the four western provinces provided an exciting chapter in Canadian theatre history and certainly made The Everyman Theatre known. Our second tour, during the fall of 1947, yielded a reasonable profit. However, the tours by themselves could not support a company on a full-time basis all the year round. Because of this we tried to rush the development of a Vancouver headquarters and at the end of 1947 we were suddenly faced with a crisis which very nearly finished The Everyman Theatre. Indeed, according to many stories which have come back to us we were finished and have not been operating since. The fact is we went into retirement for only a few months in order to get a fresh slant on the situation; decided to modify our policy for the time being, went into our third season, and wound up with a substantial balance in the bank.

We decided to forget about a theatre building of our own; to give up temporarily our full-time occupation with The Everyman and instead, earn our living in other ways while continuing to give all our free time to our theatre. This meant, of course, an indefinite postponement of any further tours. As an alternative, we decided to concentrate on building up audiences for The Everyman in and around Vancouver, playing on whatever stages we could find.

The following summer (1947) we obtained by grace of the University of B.C. the exclusive use of an excellent workshop in the Little Mountain residence camp for student veterans. We still have it, and as a workshop, storage space and rehearsal room (even at times as living quarters) it has proven indispensable to our very active program.

Our earlier tours had given us a clue or two as to where and how we would find our new audiences. In the smaller communities many persons had seen a play, if not for the first time, the first for a long, long time. Also many of our performances had been sponsored by school organizations and we had given a large number of special performances for students only.

In the Greater Vancouver area there are nearly one hundred elementary and high schools with 50,000 students and nearly half of these have

auditoriums in which a play can be presented. What more could we ask? We obtained permission from the school authorities to go ahead with the scheme that was taking a definite shape in our minds. Two plays would be necessary for a season; one suitable for elementary grade students and their parents and one for high school students and the general public.

The latter play was Bernard Shaw's "Arms and the Man". We had already presented this comedy more than fifty times on tour through B.C., but never in Vancouver, and it had proven enormously popular with every kind of audience. The question of a play for the elementary schools was answered in an interesting fashion. The previous summer The University of B.C. Summer School of the Theatre had presented "The Emperor's New Clothes" to enthusiastic audiences. What more logical than that the Everyman Theatre should take over the production and show it much more widely? By arrangement with the Department of University Extension and the Vancouver Little Theatre, we obtained the use of the beautiful costumes and very effective settings which had been specially designed for the play; we retained most of the original cast, only strengthening some of the minor roles with our regular Everyman actors.

Now we persuaded the Parent Teachers' Associations in the various elementary schools to sponsor the performances of "The Emperor." The MacMillan Clubs undertook to sponsor "Arms and the Man" in the high schools. From October through to April, "The Emperor" was presented on most Friday nights, this being the most suitable night of the week for younger children, with the curtain going up at 7:30 or 8 o'clock. Later in the year the performances of "Arms and the Man" on Wednesday and/or Thursday nights took their place in the program.

In the school auditoriums we found the stages on which to play and our new audiences to play to. As a city, Vancouver is made up of a relatively small, but very crowded, downtown area fringed by a wide-spreading semi-circle of "neighborhoods", each of which is something of a town in itself. By taking our plays right into these neighborhoods we played to many more people than if we had given our performances in the downtown area.

Ticket selling and advertising became comparatively easy and inexpensive matters. Altogether the financial set-up was most satisfactory. Because we were able to keep the operating expenses down to a minimum, we could charge extremely low admission prices. This helped us to meet the movies on their own ground. For the elementary school performances we charged fifty cents for adults and twenty-five cents for the children. In the high schools it was a straight fifty cents generally with occasionally some seats at seventy-five cents.

The Everyman Theatre paid all the expenses and took eighty per cent of the first hundred dollars and fifty per cent of everything over and above the first hundred. Our sponsors distributed the advertising material which we supplied and sold the tickets and took twenty per cent of the first hundred dollars and the remaining fifty per cent of everything over and above. Not exactly a set-up likely to yield a great fortune, and yet one which does allow us to pay all our bills and continue to operate on a reasonable budget.

For our fourth season (1949-50) we have followed the same general plan but on a slightly more ambitious scale. A comic dramatization of the

familiar story of Little Red Riding Hood is the play for the younger children. As there were still some schools in which "Arms and the Man" had not been shown, we kept it in production. The first performance of our new major production, "Noah" took place on the large Technical School stage on Wednesday, November 16th.

This year The Everyman Theatre company numbers nine men and nine women. Most of these appeared in two of the three plays; a few in only one, and fewer still in all three. Besides the acting, all the administrative, technical and production work is done by the members of this small group. Keeping three productions playing regularly on different stages over a period of several months makes a heavy program. Real enthusiasm and a thoroughly professional attitude are necessary to carry it out successfully.

—Sidney Risk

## Wednesday, May 10th—Evening

AWAKE AND SING

Belmont Group Theatre

The Belmont Group Theatre was formed in the spring of 1942 by a group of earnest and enthusiastic young people who had worked in amateur and professional theatres around the country. They wanted to create a "group" theatre which would stress the highest standards of theatre technique, and produce plays of wide diversity in a manner which would increase the audience's appreciation of theatre, and in so doing perfect and develop the actor's technique.

This has not always been easy since the theatre has never had a permanent studio. It has nearly always had to organize its own audiences, and has tried to build and develop a company of actors who although aiming at the highest possible professional standards, received no more recompense than the knowledge of a job done well. Through the past years we have built up a fairly competent acting company, many of whom started in our workshop classes and have remained to become actors with a slightly different orientation to the art of acting. This orientation or attitude will be enlarged on later, when I discuss our approach to the actor's problem.

We have produced a great variety of plays, and perhaps a mention of these may illustrate how unlimited we intend to be in our selection. Our past productions include: "Ghosts": "Watch On The Rhine" by Lillian Hellman: "Taming of the Shrew": "The Untitled" by Norman Corwin: two original Canadian plays by one of the founders of our theatre, Lucille Kallen—"The Key", and "The Practical People": "An Enemy of the People": "My Sister Eileen": "Rocket To The Moon" by Clifford Odets: "Macbeth": "Hello, Out There" by William Saroyan: an original wartime revue titled "Let's Be Offensive": the Chekhov farces—"The Bear", and "The Marriage Proposal".

In approaching these different plays, different styles of acting were necessary, and flexibility of the actors a prime condition. For example—our production about four years ago of "The Taming of the Shrew" was a bold, flamboyant one. It sounded a gay, carefree, carnival note—and played with the Latin fire and fancy we imagine the famous "Commedia dell' Arte"

companies to have had. About a year before the group had produced Lillian Hellman's "Watch On The Rhine", a dramatic document of our times, and here the contrast in acting techniques gave us a production that was acclaimed for its sensitivity and compelling force. In different vein, we produced "My Sister Eileen", and here was excellent material for the sincere actor who wanted to perfect his technique and gain wider experience in that very difficult, but highly rewarding type of play—the Broadway farce.

In the present production of Clifford Odets' "Awake And Sing" the group faced the challenge of doing a play which demanded the utmost of the actor's skill. The director's job was to translate a so-called "naturalistic" script into a dramatic projection of life in the New York Bronx, circa 1936. His problem was one of "selective" detail. The setting had to look "real" not "stagey" and give due emphasis to the main theme of the drama (which seemed to be cluttered with a great deal of insignificant trivia) and give credibility, or second and third dimensions to the actors, who were to emerge as living people. The first problem for the actor was to fully understand the character he intended to create. Comprehensive case histories were the order of the day for each member of the cast. Detail and insignificant trivia were put on paper, and the fictitious characters in the Odets' play began to take on a reality in the mind and imagination of the actor in rehearsal. From these backgrounds sprang the motivations for the desires—wills—and actions found in the script, which now became fully crystallized as rehearsals progressed. Then came that important ingredient—"relationship". The attitude of each character in the play to each of the others needed probing and justification. And this helped immeasurably in strengthening the actor's image of the character he was creating. And then, of course, "characterization". This had been growing steadily since the beginning of each actor's case-history. But now it was strengthened by acute observation of people in daily life, people, who in some small or larger degree, contained the ingredients of the people portrayed in the Odets' play. Finally, to return to that magic word "ensemble". This was the motif instilled into every actor—"the importance of truly listening to another person on stage—and to talk to not at other characters on stage". In this approach to the play we in the Belmont Group Theatre feel that the means have been justified by the end result, for an actor who understands what he's doing, and why, will find no difficulty in identifying himself with the character he plays. In turn, this belief in the situation, in people's identities, and clear-cut relationships, will, if projected properly, communicate itself to an audience. As a result, the audience, it is hoped, forgets about sundry items like actors, scenery, and all the other conventional paraphernalia attendant on the stage, and fully believes in the drama itself.

—Ben Lennick

## Thursday, May 11th

THE RIVALS

Workshop 14

In 1936 Western Canada High School Department of Drama was established under the direction of Miss Betty Mitchell, and produced more than 35 major and minor plays in nine years. But there was no theatre in Calgary or in the West where graduates might continue their studies.

In the summer of 1944 Betty Mitchell returned to the city after a stay of 18 months in the U.S. where she had been studying the American Amateur Theatre, travelling from coast to coast on a National Theatre Travelling Fellowship. In the United States Miss Mitchell found hundreds of Community theatres, many of them of such high calibre that Broadway and Hollywood were turning to them for talent. Under her direction, Workshop 14 was formed in the fall of 1944 with an original membership of four W.C.H.S. Alumni. The School Board co-operated by removing the wall between two class rooms, creating a studio theatre in E14 known as Workshop 14, where the group met every Monday night. The group has since acquired its own workshop in an old, renovated barn.

From its inception, Workshop has been serious in its approach toward the theatre arts. It has attracted to its rigorous regime only those young people who hope to make theatre their principal avocation or who are ambitious to work professionally on the stage or in radio. The actual work of production has been supplemented by classes in all phases of theatre art.

At first the plays selected were not too demanding. "Papa is All", "Claudia", "Holiday", were some of the early choices. Two years ago, however, the members felt that the time had come to tackle more difficult plays, and accordingly Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" was chosen for major production last year, and Sheridan's "The Rivals" this year. It is hoped that the emphasis will continue to be laid upon great plays of this character. The group has won the Alberta Regional Festival four times in the past five years.

While membership in the club has remained constant, it has been widely fluctuating. A large number of the original members are now professionals in radio and have either left the city or are working here in local studios and so are unavailable for stage work. Others have gone to the theatres of New York, Hollywood and London. Several are at the moment in drama schools in the United States. To assist members studying in the U.S. Workshop has offered three \$200 scholarships. Gordon Atkinson, who returned recently from Pasadena, is the first paid director of the group.

Workshop dream of a day when their trained members will return to the city and assist them in founding a theatre and drama school of their own, and they are encouraged in this dream by the enthusiasm for returning displayed by those who are at present away.

## Friday, May 12th

OUR TOWN

Brockville Theatre Guild

The Brockville Theatre Guild has been in continuous existence since 1929. The Guild has had an entry in the Regional Festival every year since the inception of the Dominion Drama Festival, and on three occasions has won the award for the best short play. This year, for the first time, the Guild won its Regional with its full-length production of "Our Town", in competition with eight other groups.

Through the years the Guild has presented more than a hundred shows —scores of short plays as well as long plays like "The Dover Road", "Laburnum Grove", "Hay Fever", "Ladies in Retirement", "John Loves Mary", "Lovers and Friends", etc. In '43 and '44 the group suspended operations but was represented in Canada and overseas by "The Brockettes", a concert troupe directed by Dora Challice who is now living in Halifax.

Most of the Guild productions make use of curtains and are performed in the auditorium of the Collegiate Institute which now has fine lighting and stage equipment. There is a Guild Hall downtown, occupying a whole floor in an office building; here there is ample space for rehearsing and parties, for the making of sets and for the storing of props and costumes. Several times a year there are play readings and try-outs open to the entire membership which pays a nominal fee and now numbers about 400.

Each year the Guild procures some professional direction which not only gets a show on the boards, but also serves as a school for directors. From time to time the Guild interchanges productions with other playing groups and in this way has learned many of the techniques of the amateur theatre. As a matter of fact the Guild has sent out a fair number of its "graduates" into other playing groups all across Canada.

Last year the Guild was host to the Eastern Ontario Drama Festival.

Mr. Filmore Sadler (Fil) and Dr. John Carroll (Jack) teamed up to produce "Our Town". Jack cast the show, did the initial rehearsing, the staging and light; Fil set the show and directed it.

Filmore Sadler is the director and owner of Brae Manor School of The Theatre, located at Knowlton, Quebec, one of the loveliest places in eastern Canada. He and his charming wife have professional stage backgrounds, and theirs is one of the finest summer theatres on the continent. Incidentally, Fil has done much for the M.R.T. and for others of the senior playing groups in Canada.

Jack Carroll is the founder of the Theatre Guild and has played and directed for years with it. He has been a governor of the Dominion Drama Festival for several years and has been twice chairman of the Eastern Ontario Drama Festival. He has in his cast George Fulford, M.P. for Leeds, whom he opposed unsuccessfully in last year's Federal election. In spite of the rough and tumble of politics and theatre, they are still warm friends.

## Saturday, May 13th—Matinee

L'AVARE

Cercle Moliere

"It was a lovely play; it was delightful to hear some good lines by a master. The audience, whether it understood the words or not, enjoyed it. Beyond having an extremely good play you had an extremely good cast. The cast was entirely suitable and all concerned entered into the spirit of the thing with good characterizations."

With these words Maxwell Wray opened his adjudication of Moliere's play "L'Avare" presented by Le Cercle Moliere of St. Boniface under the direction of Madame Pauline Boutil. Then on the closing night of the Regional Dominion Drama Festival, all awards were conferred upon this

group—for the play itself, for the best actress, Raymonde Marchande and for the best actor, Louis Souchon, who along with Leo Remillard received honorable mention at Ottawa in 1948.

This will be a memorable year for Le Cercle Moliere, not alone because they are eligible once again to represent Manitoba at the Dominion Drama finals. Winning at festivals is no new experience for this talented group. Four times they have won the Plaque du Festival for the best play in French. In 1934 they won the award with "Blanchette", in 1936 with "Les Soeurs Guedonnec," in 1938 with "Le Chant du Berceau" and in 1948 with "La Donation."

This year, however, they are celebrating their silver anniversary by presenting a play by the great master after whom their group is named. Madame Boutal who is a perfectionist has not felt that they were ready to produce one of Moliere's plays, but she was encouraged to do so by Father Legault director of Les Compagnons of Montreal and by Robert Speaight, when adjudicating the Dominion finals in Ottawa in 1948. He spoke of the play "La Donation" as "one of the jewels of this week—almost perfectly done" and said "This play will be one of the memories of the Dominion Drama Festival and I only hope that sometime I shall have a chance to see this group do something by its namesake Moliere." So it is fitting that "L'Avare" should be presented this year when Le Cercle Moliere celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary.

It was in March 1925 that Louis Philippe Gagnon, A. C. de la Lande and Raymond Bernier, men who loved the French Theatre and desired to make it known and loved by French speaking Manitobans, founded the group and gave it the name of "Le Cercle Moliere". The high ideals cherished by these men have been fulfilled throughout the years, thanks to the hard work and co-operation of the members of Le Cercle, and to the artistic sense of the directors and their desire to achieve perfection.

The first director A. C. de la Lande was succeeded in 1928 by the late Arthur Boutal, whose memory is revered by all who had the privilege of performing under his expert guidance. His attention to the smallest details, his savoir-faire and his desire for the perfect performance resulted in the groups going on from one brilliant success to another, in addition to those entered in the Dominion Drama Festivals.

The outbreak of war and then the illness and death of Arthur Boutal in 1941 interrupted for a time the work of Le Cercle Moliere but in 1942 it resumed its activities under the direction of Madame Pauline Boutal who has followed closely in the footsteps of her husband with the same excellent results. No one could have been better qualified for this position than this gifted lady. She had always worked side by side with her husband, doing make-up and designing costumes and sets. She is a clever actress herself, and in 1938 she won the Lady Tweedsmuir award for the best performance by a woman when she enacted the role of "Soeur Jeanne de la Croix" in "Le Chant du Berceau." In 1948 she received the Canadian Drama Award, an honor which had been conferred earlier upon her husband.

In addition to all these accomplishments, Madame Boutal has rare talent as an artist and excels in portrait painting. She spent last year in her native France, studying art at La Grande Chaumiere, Paris. Shortly before Christmas we called upon Madame Boutal to talk about her year abroad and

found her designing costumes for "The Rose and the Ring" which was produced during the holiday season by The Winnipeg Ballet. She also designed the beautiful settings for this delightful ballet.

Upon our request Madame Boutal showed us some of the interesting studies she had done and told us how much she had enjoyed her winter in France. Her love for art, however, did not keep her away from the theatre. She found time to attend plays every week. When asked about the theatre in Paris she told us that, although there were depressing plays still being shown, such as those of Jean Paul Sartre, there was a definite swing back to classical drama and fantasy. Many of the new plays were light and fanciful, for the French people seemed to want to find happiness in the theatre.

When we discussed Le Cercle Moliere and the reasons which contribute to the success of all their productions, we learned that they spend a long time in rehearsal. Madame Boutal thinks that this is necessary in order to help the cast to become free and comfortable on the stage and to assist each one in gaining poise. They have, however, the same problem as most drama groups in Canada—the lack of a suitable place to rehearse. They are looking forward to a time when they will be able to have a club room of their own.

At present they have from one hundred and twenty-five to one hundred and fifty members. Of these, about fifty are active and twenty-five acting members. In addition to the time spent in rehearsing for their major productions they have lectures, films, and short plays, directed by members. They have given financial aid to three of their group to enable them to take the course in drama at the Banff School of Fine Arts.

Since Madame Boutal has directed Le Cercle Moliere, there have been brilliant performances of "Prenez Garde a la Peinture," "600,000 Francs par Mois," "Gai Marions Nous", "Ces Dames Aux Chapeaux Verts" and "Knock". Le Cercle on this, its silver anniversary does not propose to rest on its laurels, but looks forward to a future of promise in which it will strive to maintain the high ideals set a quarter of a century earlier by the men of vision who founded and named Le Cercle Moliere.

—Norma McGougan

## Saturday, May 13th—Evening

PRESENT LAUGHTER

Canadian Legion Players

The Canadian Legion Players was first organized in 1938 under the direction of the late F. J. Rowan, and won the Saskatchewan Regional Drama Festival that year with a presentation of Noel Coward's one-act play "Family Album."

During the war the group suspended operations and was reorganized last fall, making its first reappearance in the 1950 Regional Drama Finals with the Noel Coward comedy "Present Laughter." The play was produced and directed by William Reid.

Mr. Reid has been active in Regina drama circles, both as actor and director, for over twenty years. He has directed the winning regional play three times in the last four years. He is at present president of the Saskatchewan Drama League, and is also a governor of the Dominion Drama Festival.

# Canada Theatre Conference

The Canada Theatre Conference, meeting at the time of the Dominion Drama Festival, is designed to bring together all students of theatre for mutual discussion of problems and to present exhibitions and demonstrations which will give inspiration and encouragement to all who participate.

This is the second year of the Conference, and it promises to be in every way as interesting as the one last year in Toronto. It has the great advantage of being all under one roof. A special feature will be the lectures and demonstrations in Children's Theatre given by Kay Ortman. And do not miss the three Exhibitions of Stage Design. Donald Oenslager is one of Broadway's leading designers; he is also a professor at the Department of Drama at Yale.

The general chairman of the Conference is Dorothy Somerset of the University of British Columbia. The chairman in charge of local arrangements is A. F. Key, Director of the Coste House.

All Conference activities will be held at the CALGARY ALLIED ARTS CENTRE (The Coste House).

## MONDAY, May 8—

2:30 p.m.—OFFICIAL OPENING — Donald Oenslager Stage Designs; Canadian Stage Design; Alberta Institute of Art Costume Design.

3:30-5:00 p.m.—REGISTRATION for Canada Theatre Conference.

## TUESDAY, May 9—

10:30 a.m.—INFORMAL WORKSHOP PERIOD for theatre groups.

2:30 p.m.—PLAYWRITING SEMINAR—Robertson Davies.

4:15 p.m.—CHILDREN'S THEATRE—Lecture and demonstration by Kay Ortman.

## WEDNESDAY, May 10—

10:30 a.m.—PANEL DISCUSSION to be announced.

4:15 p.m.—CHILDREN'S THEATRE—Lecture by Kay Ortman.

## THURSDAY, May 11—

10:30 a.m.—PANEL DISCUSSION—Robert Orchard, Sydney Risk and other guests: "Educational and Recreational Aspects of the Theatre".

2:30 p.m.—INFORMAL WORKSHOP PERIOD for theatre groups.

4:15 p.m.—CHILDREN'S THEATRE—3rd lecture by Kay Ortman.

## FRIDAY, May 12—

2:30 p.m.—INFORMAL WORKSHOP PERIOD for theatre groups.

4:15 p.m.—CHILDREN'S THEATRE—4th lecture by Kay Ortman.

EXHIBITIONS OF STAGE AND COSTUME DESIGN WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC DAILY MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY FROM 10:00 A.M. TO 11:00 P.M.

THE COSTE HOUSE TEA ROOM WILL BE OPEN DAILY (except Saturday) FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS FROM 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. and FROM 9:00 to 11:00 P.M.

Coste House address: 2208 Amherst Street (8th St. West and 22nd Avenue)  
Phone W3210      Mount Royal bus to 7th and Prospect

# How to Present a Drama Festival Winner

Extract from "Producers Workshop" of February 26th; broadcast from Vancouver over CBC. Script by Ellen Harris. Producer: Nora Gibson. Cast: The Everyman Theatre.

**ANNOUNCER:** This is Producers Workshop, item eight, "How to Present a Drama Festival Winner". Tonight we will tell you the story of the Everyman Theatre, a group of young actors in Vancouver which is keeping alive the tradition of the theatre. Their story takes us to the Dominion Drama Festival in the British Columbia region. On the opening night the theatre was almost full.

**SOUND DISC:** Maxwell Wray's opening of festival . . .

**NARRATOR:** Who is going to win the coveted Hamber Award for the winning play? On that first night and on each succeeding night there were many speculations. Will it be "Candida"? Or perhaps it might be "The Little Foxes". And then again it might be "Papa Is All" . . . There is "The Winslow Boy", "George and Margaret"—oh, and of course there is "Noah" . . .

**VOICES:** "Noah"? . . . not a chance in the world! . . . I like the play "Noah" . . . If the Everyman Theatre does a good job it could win . . . I doubt it . . . I like "Noah" . . . I don't like it . . . I'm betting on "The Little Foxes" . . . "Noah" won't even be in the running . . .

**NARRATOR:** All that Festival Week the cast of "Noah" didn't say anything, they just hoped. They saw all the plays except one and listened eagerly to the words of the adjudicator. "Noah" was presented the final night. It was the last of seven plays, the night before there was a frantic last minute rehearsal . . .

**RISK:** Go home now everybody and get a good night's sleep.

**LILLIAN:** Do you think we stand a chance, Mr. Risk?

**RISK:** Your guess is as good as mine, Lillian.

**DOUG:** Everyone is saying "The Little Foxes" will win the Festival.

**RISK:** Maybe it will . . . anyway we'll know tomorrow.

**SHEILA:** I can hardly believe the day is nearly here. It just seems like yesterday we started to work on "Noah".

**JOHN:** It seems years ago to me.

**SHEILA:** When did we decide to do "Noah", Mr. Risk?

**RISK:** (very off-hand) Months ago. (Business-like) Go on home now, get a good sleep and be all ready for tomorrow.

**VOICES:** Good-night Mr. Risk . . . good-night.

**RISK:** Good-night and good-luck. (thinking quietly) . . . when did I first think of doing "Noah"? Cliff Robinson was commissioned to make the animal masks. That must have been in, let's see, the fall of 1946.

**ANIMALS . . . animal-sounds very softly**

**RISK:** I've had those masks in the basement ever since. Every time I went down to the basement they seemed to say to me, "Sydney Risk, you must do 'Noah'."

**ANIMAL-SOUNDS a little louder**

**VOICES:** You must do "Noah" . . . You must do "Noah" . . . Do "Noah" . . . DO "NOAH"!

**RISK:** All right, you silly animal masks, you heads without bodies, I'll do "Noah".

**ANIMALS make their sounds like a hurrah**

**RISK:** Just a minute, don't get too excited. Who have we in the Everyman Theatre who could play Noah?

**JOHN:** John Milligan could play Noah.

**RISK:** John Milligan, of course. He has a flexible voice, he's young, but he could be made up to look like an old man. Yes I have my Noah. Animals, the play will go on.

**ANIMALS . . . joyous sounds**

**RISK:** Keep calm! There is no use getting excited because we can't win . . . though we'll do our best. (Thinking out loud) John for Noah. Lois McLean, Mrs. Noah. Now who could be Ham? . . . there's a difficult role . . . Doug Hellier could do that.

**(ANIMALS come in . . . questioning sounds)** They think they are forgotten. Don't worry you animal masks, bear, lion, monkey, cow, tiger. I'll take you out of this basement and put you on the Ark.

**NARRATOR:** And so Sydney Risk decided his Everyman Theatre would produce "Noah", and here we must digress for a moment to find out just what the Everyman Theatre is.

**THOR:** It's not a building . . .

**JOHN:** It's a group of people . . .

**LOIS:** Under the direction of Sydney Risk . . .

**DOUG:** There are eighteen of us . . .

**JOHN:** We do everything . . .

**MICHAEL:** Act . . .

SHEILA: Paint scenery . . .

PEG: Make costumes . . .

LILLIAN: Find properties . . .

RON: Doug Hellier is our stage manager . . .

MICHAEL: Peg Dixon looks after the costumes . . .

LOIS: All the girls help sew . . .

RISK: And I dyed the material for the costumes of Noah in my mother's wash-tub . . . she was furious.

THOR: We are carpenters . . .

MICHAEL: Actors . . .

RON: Stage-hands and electricians . . .

JOHN: We rehearse our plays in our homes, in the Risk's house, or in our workrooms at Little Mountain Camp.

DOUG: We have a corner of a garage there . . .

SHEILA: It's very greasy . . .

LOIS: And cold . . .

DOUG: When we painted our back-drop it froze to the cement.

SHEILA: We tried to keep warm around a hot-plate.

MICHAEL: The Everyman Theatre, eighteen members and our workrooms, a greasy garage.

PEG: We are four years old.

MICHAEL: For the past two years we've been putting on plays in the high schools and in the schools, the P.T.A. sponsors us.

DOUG: This year we have put on "Arms and the Man", "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Noah".

JOHN: By the way, we haven't told you Sydney Risk is the founder of Everyman as well as our director. Besides that he's a slave-driver, and our inspiration.

RISK: The Everyman Theatre is a poverty-stricken amateur group trying to put on plays . . . perhaps I shouldn't say we are amateur, because sometimes when there are a few extra dollars the members do get paid.

JOHN: Yes, if there is any money left over after expenses, each actor gets two dollars.

DOUG: Often there isn't the two dollars.

NARRATOR: And that is the Everyman Theatre, the group which produced "Noah" for the Drama Festival. In the Bible story the animals went on the Ark two by two. In the play we meet only the bear, the lion, the monkey, the cow and the tiger.

RISK: Ray Jeffries, you will play the part of the bear; Gerry Dunn, you will be the lion; Dick Kahane, you are the monkey.

DICK: I'll have to go to Stanley Park to watch the monkeys and study their movements.

RISK: Jean Wright, you'll be the cow, and Marlene Lightbody, you'll be the tiger. Now as you know from reading and

studying the play, there are no ordinary speaking parts for these animals, and yet the animal sounds are very important. We won't try to get an imitative sound; we don't want moos for the cow, or roars for the lion. Yet, in spite of this, each animal must have a personality. We must aim for a sound quality which will strike the mood of the scene. We will do that scene today in Act 2 when Noah talks to the animals. It is on page 46 . . . you know the scene I mean. It takes place on the deck of the Ark. Are you ready, Noah? . . .

NARRATOR: And that's the way it went, hour after hour, week after week, rehearse . . . rehearse . . . paint, sew, hammer . . . rehearse . . . work harder. RISK: The time is getting short . . . we must work harder . . . put more life into it . . . more vitality.

NARRATOR: And then came Sunday night, December 10th. At 10:30 the 'phone rang in the Risk home. (Sound: telephone rings)

RISK: Hello! . . . hello!

VOICE: I want to speak to Mr. Risk.

RISK: Sydney Risk here.

VOICE: Do you know Thor Arngrim?

RISK: Why of course I do. He is in our Everyman Theatre.

VOICE: He's been hurt. He was driving on the Hope Princeton Highway today and the car went over the bank.

RISK: Is he badly hurt?

VOICE: I don't know . . . it's his back . . . it may be broken.

NARRATOR: Fortunately though, Thor's back was not broken. It was badly wrenched, and for some weeks—in fact almost up to the Festival performance of "Noah"—the doctor thought he might have to put Thor into a cast. The boy suffered severe pain but in spite of this he was at the rehearsal the very next day. For some days he could only sit and do his part from a chair. He had considerable difficulty climbing up onto Mount Ararat, in fact the set had to be changed to enable Thor to get up on Ararat at all. Though Thor never missed a rehearsal, the possibility of the plaster cast was ever-present in his mind, and in the minds of the other members of the group, because if a cast was necessary it would have been impossible for Shem to take his part in the play.

RISK: Feeling any better tonight, Thor?

THOR: Oh, I'm all right Mr. Risk, just a bit stiff.

RISK: Take it easy then, and we'll do some of the chorus work tonight. Don't you move around . . . just sit there . . . say your lines but keep still. I want to do

(Continued on Back Inside Cover)

# **Western Regional Festivals**

## **AT VANCOUVER—January 16th to 21st**

This year's festival was a tremendous improvement over the past two years. One of the most gratifying aspects was the enthusiastic response of the general public. We played to practically full houses the entire week, including a matinee. Apart from any financial consideration, the effect on all concerned with the festival was most stimulating.

To a casual observer this may have seemed to arise from the ebullience of our adjudicator, Mr. Maxwell Wray, but in actual fact it was due to good advance publicity, an excellent choice of play and the high standard of production of all entries. The newspapers were generous with space and reported accurately and well. The town was made aware of the importance of the Drama Festival, and the support given it inspires confidence in future ventures.

Planning was begun at an early date. Under the efficient chairmanship of Mrs. Jessie Richardson and the professional direction of our production manager, Ian Dobbie, all departments worked smoothly and harmoniously. The Festival Committee were pleased with the early response from contestants. Far more interest was shown since it was announced that full-length plays only were acceptable.

We had eight entries—one later unavoidably withdrawn. They were, without exception, all well cast and directed. Effort and imagination had been used to ensure artistic and authentic settings and costumes. Maxwell Wray said that the set for "Papa Is All", the presentation by the Vagabond Players of New Westminster, was the best he had ever seen in any amateur production.

—Phoebe Smith

## **AT EDMONTON—January 26th to 28th**

Last fall the Alberta Drama League decided not to hold a Pre-Regional Festival due to the indefinite plans of various drama clubs concerning their entry. Instead, the Drama League had the entries adjudicated on home ground by a board of three adjudicators, the board to select three plays to participate in the Regional Festival in Edmonton on January 26th, 27th and 28th.

Perhaps it was due to the D.D.F. coming west at last that there were more entries than anticipated. The general quality of the plays which were not invited to the Regional deserves greater publicity and encouragement than they received. Once the fan-fare and excitement of the Regional Festival starts up we are apt to forget the hard work and sincere efforts of the groups that did not reach the Regional. Their efforts contributed immeasurably to the Festival and their productions must be taken into consideration if one is to estimate the growth of theatre within the province during the year.

Six plays were entered for the Pre-Regional adjudication. "Murray Hill" was entered by the Coleman Players; "An Inspector Calls" by the Calgary Arts and Letters Club; "The Male Animal" by the Medicine Hat Civic Theatre; "Laura" by the Calgary Civic Theatre; "The Rivals" by Calgary's Workshop 14; "Henry IV" by the Studio Players of Edmonton.

The last three were selected to take part in the Regional Festival. This does not indicate that the other three plays were without merit or that they

were not good theatre. "The Male Animal" was judged during a rehearsal and it was impossible to predict how the show might develop, but for a group of relatively inexperienced actors they were doing excellent work. In all three of these plays there were individual acting jobs that rivalled some of the finest in the Regional. "An Inspector Calls" introduced a new designer, Marion Nicoll, whose work was on a par with the best. In the case of "An Inspector Calls" and "Murray Hill", the choice of plays was not satisfactory in view of the limitations inherent in a competitive festival, but this is more a criticism of the competitive set-up rather than of the groups involved.

The Regional Festival was of high calibre. The Studio Players opened the Festival with their production of Pirandello's "Henry IV". The adjudicator highly approved of the choice of play, the sets and costumes and praised Robert Orchard's outstanding portrayal of Henry IV. Main criticism directed at the direction of the play was for faulty grouping and lack of projection by the actors. In dealing with the other actors in the play, the comments were of general rather than specific nature, but centred mainly around lack of proper body movement.

Calgary Civic Theatre's production of "Laura" was complimented on the over-all acting of the company, but again the criticism was for lack of projection. Evelyn Lawson received the best actress award for her performance in the difficult title role.

The winning play was "The Rivals" produced by Workshop 14 of Calgary. The company was commended for having captured the style and atmosphere of the period, but it was indicated that the timing, pace and projection could be improved. The main criticism was for using the floor as part of the playing area, making it difficult for the audience to see and hear. Ed. Holmes was awarded the best actor award for his convincing performance as Sir Anthony Absolute.

The Regional Festival was, in the words of the Festival Chairman, "a financial and artistic success." To estimate the real contribution of the Festival we must wait and see if the same support is forthcoming next year and if the same groups enter with the same enthusiasm.

—Esther Nelson

#### AT REGINA—February 1st to 4th

Taking a leaf out of its parents' book, Saskatchewan's regional drama festival in February featured full-length productions on three evenings and centred attention on Canadian one-act plays for another. The result was a festival full of contrast aimed at varied tastes and certainly giving the customers their money's worth. From February 1 to February 4, the plays were produced in Darke Hall in Regina with Maxwell Wray sitting in a lonely little oasis in the centre of the hall to adjudicate the productions.

The festival opened with four one-act plays, all Canadian. These included "The Rainmaker" (Gwen Pharis Ringwood) presented by Regina Little Theatre Workshop and directed by Muriel Clements; "The Courting of Marie Jenvrin" (Ringwood again) by Moose Jaw Normal School, directed by Margaret Ann Brown, assisted by M. Graboski; "Take A Letter" (Anne Flavell) by the College of Agriculture, University of Saskatchewan, directed by K. W. Gordon; and "The Royal Touch" (Elsie Park Gowan) by Saskatoon Normal School, directed by Laura Gould.

"The Rainmaker" carried off the evening's awards in this group. It was named provincial winner in the Dominion contest for the Sir Barry Jackson challenge trophy. On top of that, the director was handed a cheque for \$75, an award made by Radio Station CKCK for the best Canadian one-act play.

"The Courting of Marie Jenvrin" took the North Battleford Rotary club cup for the winning play in the provincial class "B" final and also fell heir to a cheque for \$50 from CKCK. Mr. Wray seemed pleased with what he saw, liked the "terrific variety" of the plays offered. He thought "The Rainmaker" was an extremely difficult play, too long, inviting cuts at certain points, but played with good attack and sincerity by the Regina group.

When mapping the season's productions, Regina Little Theatre Society executive agreed that of the two first plays one would be chosen as a festival entry. When the time came to make the choice, the Society decided both plays should go in. "Night Must Fall" (Emlyn Williams) which Hilda Allen directed, played on the second night of the festival and "The Damask Cheek" (John Van Druten and Lloyd Morris) directed by Kay Kritzwiser, was Friday's entry.

Mr. Wray thought "Night Must Fall" was a "grim" piece and a difficult one to tackle, since so much depended on suspense and atmosphere. He felt there were moments of "lull" in the play, a fault he had found in Vancouver and Edmonton too. "I have got to stop this fault before I leave Canada," he told the audience. "I cannot see plays being so nearly excellent but just missing the mark. That is what happened tonight."

When it came to "The Damask Cheek" of Friday night Mr. Wray made no bones about the play being "a thing of gossamer" and a play that could not succeed outside the sophisticated atmosphere of London or New York. He liked the company, expanded to the extent of telling them "you are one of the best companies I have seen in this festival. It is a great pity you have wasted your talents on this play."

Saturday night's play was more to Mr. Wray's taste, for to Noel Coward's "Present Laughter", presented by the Canadian Legion Players, he gave the awards right across the board. "Present Laughter" was directed by Bill Reid, whose winning regional play, "Private Lives" last year stirred up something of a hornet's nest when it was not invited to play in the Dominion finals. "Present Laughter" was judged the best full-length play of the festival and won the Cameron McIntosh cup on that score. Mr. Reid also had the happy experience of having a cheque for \$125 placed in his hand as Radio Station CKCK's recognition of the winning play.

The best actor cup went to Bill Walker of "Present Laughter" for his performance as Gary Essendine. Bill Walker's silver-cleaning technique must be perfection by now since this was the fifth successive year he had taken a best actor cup in the regional festivals. Three years ago he won the Dominion best actor award as well. Another member of "Present Laughter", Jeanne Morphy, who played the Monica role, won the best actress award.

This left no doubt in anyone's mind that "Present Laughter" was "finals" material, and when the news came through from Calgary that the Canadian Legion Players entry had been chosen to play in the Dominion Drama finals there was approval indeed in the province's theatre circles.

—K. M. Kritzwiser

## AT WINNIPEG—February 6th to 8th

The Dominion Drama Festival (Manitoba Region) was by far the most successful festival Manitoba has had since the resumption of festivals following the war years. The audience, although rather small for the first presentation, increased nightly and for the closing performance almost filled the theatre.

On the 6th The Teachers' Dramatic Society presented "Love Story" by Aubrey C. Green of Winnipeg, directed by his wife Peggy Green, and Mr. Wray welcomed a Canadian play to the festival although he felt it was not entirely satisfactory. On the 7th, Le Cercle Moliere presented "L'Avare" directed by Madame Pauline Boutil, and in Mr. Wray's words it was a "lovely play extremely well done." The Festival closed on the 8th with a presentation by the Winnipeg Little Theatre of "Pygmalion" with Robert Jarman as director, and while Mr. Wray found the presentation to be well knit in many respects and had polish, he felt the tempo was too slow and some characterizations not entirely satisfactory. The honors went entirely to Le Cercle Moliere as in addition to being judged the best play in the festival the awards for best actor and actress were given to Louis Souchon as Cleante, and Raymonde Marchande as Frosine.

As is to be expected in all festivals, the adjudications did not entirely coincide with the opinion of all, but one matter on which everyone agreed was that Mr. Maxwell Wray was most fair and helpful. Everyone thought his idea of having the cast come out into the theatre for the adjudication was excellent, and despite the fact that the adjudications were lengthy and the hour late he was always ready to have the cast come back to the stage for further discussion on various phases of the production. This was much appreciated. On the first day of the festival the Hudson's Bay Company entertained at luncheon for Mr. Wray and on the closing night Mrs. Grant Dexter entertained in honor of the directors, casts and committee where more opportunity was provided for Mr. Wray to meet the players.

Manitoba is proud to know that Le Cercle Moliere will represent the province at the Dominion Finals at Calgary and we wish them well.

We are very pleased to learn that the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association has renewed its scholarships for advanced training in drama, painting and musical composition, as a token of "its interest in well balanced Canadian citizenship." Two scholarships, each valued at two thousand dollars, are offered. Consideration will be given to applications from Canadian citizens between the ages of twenty and thirty years who are qualified to undertake advanced education in some aspect of drama, musical composition or painting. Preference will be given to candidates who seek advanced training which is not available in Canada, and who have well-considered study-plans related to teaching offered in other countries. Preference will also be given to students who indicate that they lack financial resources needed to enable them to continue with advanced studies.

Candidates who wish to be considered for immediate or future C.A.H.A. Scholarships should direct informal letters of application to The Secretary, The Canada Foundation, 56 Sparks Street, Ottawa. Applications are invited now, and at any rate not later than June 15th, 1950. It is hoped that the awards will be announced by July 15, 1950.

# The Future of Speech Training in Western Canada

EVANGELINE MACHLIN

(An Address given to the Western Canada Theatre Conference, Banff, August, 1949.  
Dr. Machlin is in charge of the Speech Department at the Neighbourhood Playhouse  
School of the Theatre, New York.)

The subject of speech training is one in which I have the deepest personal interest. To begin with, I want to state strongly that the need for it in Canada, as in the States, is tremendous; but the facilities for studying it here are woefully inadequate.

My own experience in the search for speech training may well be typical. While working as a director of dramatics at Mt. Allison University I first felt the need of help in this field. When students were inaudible at rehearsals, all I could do for them was to shout "Louder, LOUDER!", which was about as useful as crying out to a drowning man, "Swim!" But no organized speech training was available in Canada, so at last I went to the States to get it. I studied at Columbia University, then began to teach in New York, and have remained there ever since.

It is not only dramatic directors who feel the need of help for their acting students; teachers and doctors wonder what to do with children whose defective speech calls out for diagnosis and treatment; adults in the business field want effective speech, and students themselves often feel intensely inadequate on the stage or before their fellows. This is particularly bad in a democracy, where the individual's ability to stand up and speak for himself clearly and effectively is a pre-requisite for participation in civic life.

These things being so, someone in Western Canada must take the lead in providing for these crying needs, and the obvious instrument is the university. Which university of Western Canada will scoop the field? A good speech department would certainly attract students from all over the West. But it would probably begin unobtrusively, making its entrance by a side door—usually the stage door—when some director of dramatics goes to the president of his university and says, "I cannot meet the speech needs of my students. We must have a trained person here to deal with them."

Let us suppose that the president—a man with an eye to the future—heeds the petition, finds a good man, and appoints him at a good salary. What would be the first courses set up in speech training?

The basic course in speech, no matter what the ultimate object the student has in view, should always be a course in voice and diction. The objectives should be very simple, the development of a voice that is pleasant to hear and easy to understand. All the teaching should direct itself forthrightly to these ends; the students should learn the techniques of relaxation, breathing, and resonant tone production, so that they may be pleasant to hear; and the techniques of articulation and of variety, so that they may be easy to understand. The course should meet at least twice a week, better three times, as muscular habits of good speech are being formed.

Two pieces of equipment the speech instructor should have: a phonograph and a speech recorder, both of high quality. The recorder has manifold uses. Its hour-length reel can be most useful as a permanent record of a

class of twenty students. On the first day of term we proceed as follows: we record John's voice for one minute, then allow the reel to run for two minutes in silence; we repeat this process with Bill, and so on with all the others. The next day we play back the recording, running through the reel without stopping. We hear John's voice for one minute; then the instructor discusses it for two minutes, analysing its faults and failings—a process horrifying to John, but limited in time, because exactly at the end of two minutes Bill's recording is heard, cutting off the teacher's remarks. This is chastening for the students, but salutary—as they prepare strenuously to improve their voices before the second recording.

This is done at mid-term, when we fill in the second minute with a new recording by each student. This playback is apt to be most dramatic, as we hear first John's weak nervous tones—and then his strong booming voice, as in the second round he strives to overcome all his initial weaknesses. His resonance is probably unbalanced, but John is delighted! The rest of the term we work for quality rather than quantity; and at the end of the term, John fills in his third minute with a recording in which he aims at a clear, controlled, easy voice. The three successive recordings make an absolutely objective record of his progress. A student leaving such a course is apt to have both a sense of achievement in what he has done, and an awareness of what remains to be done.

His next step in speech training depends on his purpose. The young actor now needs a course in oral reading—sometimes called oral interpretation. It will prepare him for the auditions in which he will read for actual roles; and it will prepare the radio aspirant for his work also. In addition, it has the highest cultural value. This course teaches the student to read aloud so as to communicate, and in himself, to relax, to keep the eye ahead of the voice, and to make it snatch up many words at one glance. We record his readings, and let him rerecord for greater effectiveness. We let him listen to recordings—to Barrymore's immortal "Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!", to Robeson and Ferrer as Othello and Iago, and for sharp contrasts, to some of the historical speeches in the wonderful set of records "I can hear it now."

The third major speech course will probably be one in phonetics. It should be presented as a tool subject, as a means to an end, rather than as an end in itself. It helps vastly in the acquiring of standard speech, as the eye sees the difference between correct and wrong pronunciations, and helps the ear to achieve the right one. It enables the actor to learn dialects more efficiently; and it is essential for the speech therapist, whose speech training will be further considered later.

A speech course that may be offered both from the English and from the drama angle may be one in the speaking of poetic drama. I have found that nothing broadens and deepens the actor's voice like working at the great Shakespearean speeches. The long, rolling periods, the organic rhythm, and the splendid poetry demands from the actor his finest and purest articulation, with fullest projection. The great Greek dramas serve the same end; they stir the spirit while using all the resources of the body as a speech instrument for the interpretation of the classics.

Courses in the debating arts and in choral speech may be added as the department grows. However, I do not suggest the inclusion of courses in voice for the radio. The good voice as developed by the basic course is

likewise the good voice for radio—the engineer at the controls will take care of adjustments for the microphone.

Now it is time to consider the teacher's needs in speech training. The teacher's voice is important as an example for all the children he teaches. His knowledge of how to work with children's voices is equally important. He should teach speech as he teaches health habits of cleanliness, posture, and so on, by precept and by example; and the greatest of these is example. But when he finds a child with sick speech, as with physical illness, it is time to refer to the specialist—the speech therapist in the one case, as the doctor in the other.

But where is the speech therapist to be found? They are few and far between in Canada. Their training must be undertaken by the speech department of a university. It must offer both the theory of speech correction, and clinical practice in the same. Speech disorders may be psychological in origin, as stuttering; or physical, as in the case of the cleft palate. Hence the ideal university for the speech therapist will be one in which there is a department of psychology and a faculty of medicine, from which professors can offer the needed specialized courses.

I conceive, then, of some Western University undertaking and building up a department for speech majors, which may attract students from all over Canada and beyond. It will be closely related to the department of dramatics, which will send over students for voice and diction, oral reading, and poetic drama. It will be linked to the guidance department, giving every entering freshman a speech test, and sending him to the basic voice and diction course, or to the laboratory corrective course if needed. It will see that all students who intend to teach take at least the basic course; it may even persuade the faculty of the theological school to offer a similar course to all its students, to the great advantage of church-goers of future years! It will build up and develop a strong course in speech therapy, and demand that speech therapists be placed on the staffs of larger schools and hospitals.

Beyond even the University course, however, lies the dream of the young actor—the professional school of acting, where he may leave all other studies, and devote himself entirely and deeply to his chosen art. Already the Banff School of Fine Arts plans to include in its future development such a school. Here students of the theatre will devote themselves to the three great elements of the art—movement, acting and speech. They will work at their speech techniques daily instead of weekly, and build up at last a speech that is a trained, responsive instrument, wholly under the sway of the acting, never the master, always the servant of the acting itself. Yet in a strange sense, the actor as he speaks is instrument and player all in one, his whole body the speech instrument, his mind and spirit the player. And at last, the long drudgery of the mastery of techniques of movement and speech are forgotten, or rather fused into the very intent of the actions; and there happens in the theatre that rare crystallization when the actor, speaking or silent, moving or still, by his act of creation carries the very spirit of his audience with him into the moment of passion that is eternal.

These, then, are the needs, and these are the possibilities of speech training at the present moment. I commend them to this conference in confident expectation that the next few years will bring notable developments in the whole field of speech in not one, but all the provinces of Western Canada.

**FORTUNE MY FOE,** by Robertson Davies

(Toronto, Clarke Irwin and Co. Ltd.) \$1.50

There used to be a time, not so very long ago, when a great many Englishmen would have been quite astonished to hear that it was possible for one of their numbers to compose good symphonies and operas. But then along came Vaughan Williams and William Walton and Benjamin Britten and showed that it could be done. Canadian artists in general (not just composers) find themselves in the same position. They must convince a none too enthusiastic public that there are some home-grown products that can be admired without condescension and, perhaps more important, that can be paid the compliment of honest criticism. There has been some progress in this battle of Canadian artist versus Canadian public. The public is now ready to admit that Canadians can write fine radio-plays, that some of them write good poetry and even good novels, that there are some good painters and musicians working in this country.

What about the drama? Though there has been quite a stirring recently, and though a good many amateur and even semi-professional groups are operating all over the country, Canadian playwrights are few and far between, and most of them have kept to the one-acter. Along comes Mr. Robertson Davies and presents us with a respectable full-length play, which has already been successfully performed by amateur groups. Clarke, Irwin has now published this play ("Fortune, My Foe"), reasonably priced at \$1.50, and I hope that groups everywhere will avail themselves of the opportunity to present this play which is certainly as good as the run-of-the-mill products which we so avidly import from Broadway, and a good deal better than most.

"Fortune, My Foe" is an interesting play and Mr. Davies is an interesting playwright, though he has serious limitations. His most serious weakness is that he cannot create really memorable and living characters. His characters have a curiously puppet-like quality and are overly given to epigrammatic utterances which remind one uneasily of the early Shaw, a playwright whom Mr. Davies evidently greatly admires. ("Nothing brings out the Jeremiah in a professor like the thought of an entirely new group of virgin intellects bearing down upon him from the high schools of Canada," is an example of what I mean.) At best Mr. Davies' characters are types like Professor Rowlands and the exiled Czech puppeteer Franz Szabo, drawn with very little subtlety, at worst rather unconvincing caricatures like Orville Tapscott and Mrs. E. C. Philpott.

Now there is nothing to be said against types and caricatures as such. Moliere and Ben Jonson have proved that it is possible to create dramatic masterpieces entirely based on types. But what these masters did was to invent and to sustain marvellous, vigorous comic scenes which, through sheer power of originality, pierced the surface and revealed the universality of the type. There are one or two scenes in "Fortune, My Foe" when Mr. Davies is able to breathe that kind of life into his types. I am thinking especially of the scene in Act III when Szabo is presenting a puppet version of Don

Quixote to the two "recreation experts" Mr. Tapscott and Mrs. Philpott, whose comments clearly reveal their ignorance and insensitivity. If Mr. Davies could invent more scenes of such calibre, and sustain them through three acts, he would become a really first-rate comic dramatist.

The play itself is a "problem play", having as its central theme the exodus of Canadian talent to the United States in search of fame and especially of fortune. It is on this level—critical rather than creative—that Mr. Davies is at his best. He speaks with obvious conviction and there is an urgency about what he has to say, which makes his plea both moving and convincing. "Everybody says Canada is a hard country to govern, but nobody mentions that for some people it is also a hard country to live in. Still, if we all run away it will never be any better. So let the geniuses of easy virtue go southward; . . . But for some of us there is no choice; let Canada do what she will with us, we must stay." Whether the Canadian public is sufficiently interested in those who stay to make it possible for them to earn a living, it has yet to prove. Mr. Davies thinks there is some hope, though he is not unduly optimistic. It is perhaps revealing that it is the foreigner, Szabo, who is most hopeful. "I am an artist, you know, and a real artist is very, very tough," he says. "This is my country now, and I am not afraid of it." Will the indifference of this country wear him down as it has worn down so many before him?

One wonders, of course, as one reads the play, whether it points the way for other playwrights in this country. Now, although I am very glad that this play has been written, I don't think that it does because, neither in subject matter nor in treatment, does it break new ground. Shaw supervised its birth, and much as I admire that great man, I think we must do what he did when he started out—strike out on our own, find new ways to express new experiences. By all means let us make use of the discoveries of other times and other places, but let us mold what we find there into something new and vital. We shall get nowhere if we are content to remain imitators. I should like to see the drama become more flexible, more comprehensive—more imaginative both in writing and performance than it has been during the last thirty years or so. I think our playwrights ought to make a study of Elizabethan stagecraft. Shakespeare and his contemporaries can still teach us a great deal.

And let us not confine our drama to "Canadian" problems in the superficial sense of that term. Write about life in Canada, by all means, but do not treat this life as something different and distinct. All really great drama is written primarily about human beings. Ibsen was a Norwegian, and the people in his plays are Norwegians and hence conditioned by a Norwegian environment, but their problems are not therefore peculiarly Norwegian problems. Canadian drama has been so far largely a surface drama. It has concerned itself with the superficial problems and trappings of Canadian life, and it has always defined "Canadian" by means of ready-made cliches. Until our writers begin to scratch the surface and show the man behind the cliche, we cannot hope to produce great works.

—Henry Kreisel

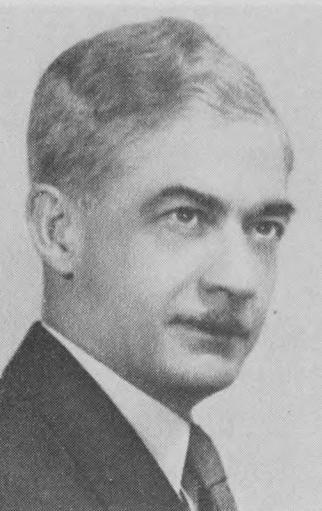
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(Mr. Kreisel is the author of an outstanding first novel, "The Rich Man". He is a graduate of the University of Toronto and is now on the staff of the University of Alberta.)

PAULINE BOUTAL



D. O. DUSSAULT



DORIS ISARD



## The Competing Directors

(We regret not to have been able to include a photo of  
Dr. John Carroll.)

SIDNEY RISK



WILLIAM REID

BETTY MITCHELL

BEN LENNICK



**Above:** Pirandello's "Henry IV", performed by the Studio Players, University of Alberta. Directed by Elizabeth Sterling Haynes and Robert Orchard.

**Below:** "Masses and Man" by Ernst Toller. Directed by Dorothy Somerset under the auspices of the Department of English at the University of British Columbia.



"The Antigone" of  
Sophocles, produced by  
the Drama Division,  
University of Alberta.



A play from Western Canada—  
Elsie Park Gowan's "Breeches from  
Bond Street" at the University of Alberta.





"Quiet Week End". Directed by  
Ian Dobbie for the Vancouver  
Little Theatre Association.

Tony Archer

"The Winslow Boy",  
Brandon Little Theatre.  
Directed by Mrs. R. A.  
Clement, Jr.



## Theatre in School

ROBERT ORCHARD

GORDON PEACOCK

"Dramatics are so messy", said a high school principal the other day, explaining why drama was not encouraged in his school and why music and art were. No one needs to put on overalls to sing or play the piano, and it is quite possible to confine art work to neat little blobs on paper. This keeps the janitor in a good humor and allows plenty of space for more vigorous and manly pursuits.

What the boys and girls say about dramatics is another thing again. To very many of them plays are chiefly valuable as a means of raising money for sport; and as for dramatics' classes, should they happen to be offered, they provide an occupation for those who can neither sing nor draw but can at least hammer in a nail, or for those merely looking for the softest option on the list. Dramatics teachers will know from their own experience how much we seem to be exaggerating the futility of the present situation.

But we are certainly not blaming it on the teachers themselves. As far as we can see, it stems from three big deficiencies which react on one another in a vicious circle. The first is inadequate teacher training in dramatics; the second, inadequate physical conditions in the schools; and the third, a totally inadequate attitude towards theatre in general on the part of the society in which we live.

The last inadequacy is a long standing one, which can only be understood in the light of history. Even the ancient Greeks used the same word to describe an "actor" and a "hypocrite". In those days art and life were so closely related that it was sometimes difficult to distinguish them. In this more advanced age we manage to keep them so far apart, that no one who has not spent all his life in the backwoods is going to be fooled into believing what an actor says.

It is really not surprising that, under the influence of the usual products of Broadway, Shaftesbury Avenue and Hollywood the theatre has become for most people a mere form of entertainment. Again we are exaggerating, but only to emphasize an attitude that constantly arises, often unconsciously, in regard to drama as education. School principals, school boards, government officials, and of course the general public of ratepayers, are only too prone to regard things theatrical as unworthy of serious consideration. Of course they are right. All too frequently the dramatics class is something to take advantage of.

And everyone is right about the theatre because at the same time they have been so wrong. What would be said if English literature was considered a subject unsuitable for schools because the dime "Western" is also a form of literary output? The teaching of English literature is suffering enough without this sort of handicap. And yet what does the live theatre mean to the average citizen of this country? Does it mean Shakespeare, Moliere,

Ibsen, Shaw and Sophocles? Does it not mean the last play put on by the high school, church or recreational group? And such plays stand in relation to the great Greek, Elizabethan and modern dramas as a "Western" does to "Wuthering Heights", or boogie-woogie to Beethoven. And yet this is what theatre means in so much of our school dramatics. The music options usually provide at least some experience in Beethoven and Brahms, the art options, some contact with Titian or Cezanne.

Music and art can also provide some form of technical instruction, and in fact this is the core of their work at present. While only here and there more creative aspects are being stressed, they at least develop technical skills in drawing and applied art, singing and playing—skills which form the background of most artists and musicians, and have been acquired in a series of well understood steps or grades.

Besides this, drama is limbo itself. (The fault lies partly with the professional theatre which has until recently regarded the art of acting as a mystery arrived at by intuition.) Such techniques as are given have usually to do with constructing and painting scenery, arranging lights and pulling curtains at the right time, all of which is merely the picture frame of drama. Indeed, the situation would be paralleled in the art room if more instructions were given in making picture frames than in painting pictures. The art of the theatre being first and foremost the art of the actor, it stands to reason that dramatic classes should concern themselves largely with acting—awakening the imaginative and creative life of the students as actors and presenting them with a properly graded series of techniques, techniques of voice, movement and inner interpretation. For while acting in the elementary grades is indistinguishable from play (a spontaneous thing, largely resulting from the right circumstances), by grade nine it is possible and even desirable to begin presenting a more technical approach, so that the plasticity and ready imagination of childhood can be retained and developed in the service of art.

It might seem that we are putting an almost professional slant on the subject, something which does not belong in the intermediate and high schools. But we are not thinking of stressing technique to any greater extent than is found in a good music or art class of the same age group. We wish merely that the drama student be given things to master which are of the very essence of his subject, at the same time recognizing that he is by no means likely to become a professional actor nor even necessarily an adult amateur actor, but is simply developing himself with whatever experience this particular art has to offer. For the interest, the character, the inspiration and the growth must be found in the subject itself and not in things extraneous to it.

How many teachers feel themselves confident to teach dramatics from this angle? How much simpler it is to put scripts in our students' hands and tell them to learn their parts by next week. And the production runs its rugged course, sans sense and sensitivity, sans everything but the natural and generally awkward vitality of youngsters.

How much easier, is it not, to have them rasp out a poem in chorus, deaf to either rhythm or word music, or stumble wearily, murderously, through the pages of "Macbeth". How much simpler just to make scrapbooks.

By and large dramatics now swings between the classroom with its rows of desks and the rectangular hole at the end of the gym—if you are fortunate

enough to have one. In the one, you can do little more than read, listen or paste. In the other, if you can find a moment when the gym instructor is getting his breath, it is all you can do to make your actors project their words in a place designed for projecting basketballs. (Well, even Shakespeare and Moliere played in tennis courts on occasion!) The stage is the actors' canvas and sound board, and a free, unrestricted use of a stage of some sort is as vital to the teaching of dramatics as are piano and phonograph to the teaching of music.

The solution, of course, is to have a classroom that is at the same time "an actors' workshop", with a small stage at one end. In lieu of a stage, an area set apart and defined by curtains, screens, or spotlights, would still make it possible for those who are acting to preserve that separation from real life that permits them to portray that life without being considered either hypocritical or socially undesirable.

All the work in the classroom centres on its stage, with the possible exception of an annual production for the public on a larger stage. Should the classroom stage be big enough for simple presentations for small audiences, that would be all to the good. For apart from the joy of always being able to rehearse on a stage on which you perform, repeated performances for a small audience are of much greater value in developing confidence both front stage and back than a single performance in a large hall.

A great deal of the "mess" of production becomes unnecessary, which should please the principals. The whole tone of the dramatics class is raised. It becomes a place for work of a special nature, requiring a special skill, and under such circumstances the dramatics class should receive no more than its fair share of idlers and dabblers.

Beginning with the simplest exercises, working up through more and more elaborate improvisations, the students will be taught how to use their feelings and intellects, their limbs and voices, to express their own ideas and those of others looking for material in their own life, in the life of other times and other places, in sheer fantasy, or in the carefully devised "life" of the well-written play. The possibilities are many and extremely varied.

It is not the purpose of this article to go any further into what should be taught. We would like instead to give a few more details on the ideal set-up in the classroom itself. These we have listed and illustrated with a plan.

#### ARRANGEMENT OF STAGE

1. **The Stage:** a platform 16' deep and as wide as the room, raised to a height of 1½'-3'. (The stage could be considerably smaller and still be of use.)

2. **Back Curtain:** mounted on a curved track, made of such materials as hessian dyed or painted grey, or, if finances permit, heavy grey cloth.

3. **Front Curtain:** of inexpensive material. This is not so important as the back curtain since scene divisions can be defined by walking on or off, or by blackouts. It is unnecessary for class work.

4. **Back Wall** finished in white plaster down to the floor with a trap or trough at the back of the stage suitable for the placing of lights. The purpose of this

would be to furnish a permanent surface which would take lighting effects.

5. **Proscenium Wings** to define the sides of the proscenium arch. These should be removable so that on occasion the full width of the stage can be used.

6. **Lighting:** Two 1"-3" pipes to carry lights, placed near the ceiling; one approximately ten feet in front of the stage, the other immediately behind a masking board on the stage (the top of the proscenium arch). A minimum of ten outlets would be needed: three on each of the pipes, and four backstage (two on the back wall, and one at each side).

7. **Lighting box:** placed downstage in the corner of one of the wings, providing two 3,000-watt dimmers and plugs for the ten circuits.

8. A large door opening from backstage into the school passageway, suitable for bringing in scenery, etc.

### THE CLASSROOM

1. Tables and chairs rather than desks are essential. These can be pushed back and used for rehearsal circles, space for improvised scenes, dance work, spectators, designing and sewing, painting and other crafts.

2. Cupboards: a set of storage cupboards placed along the back wall, in which all material and props could be stored.

3. Heavy Blackout Curtains or permanent blackout frames for the windows.

4. A sink for scene and prop painting.

5. Plug outlets for such things as irons, record player and sewing machine.

### EQUIPMENT

1. Lights: P A R's and small spots, plus gelatines or colored glass.

2. Costumes: these should be of two kinds. The first should be composed of ordinary clothes collected by the students from their homes, such as old jackets, overcoats, trousers, and dress clothes. The second kind should be simple materials readily adaptable to historical and fantastic costumes. There should be a variety of

The above plan is rather sketchy and a great deal more elaboration could be done, but from the details outlined above one can see that the cost need not be too great. In a school with Shop, Music, and House Ec. departments some of the equipment can be shared, and part of it can be constructed on the school premises. The plan has been based on the typical school classroom, and while it could easily be included in a newly designed school, there is no reason why such a proposal could not be adapted to any school, old or new.

If funds or facilities do not permit such a plan, a simpler set-up can still be incorporated in the classroom, retaining the essential features. The stage size can be contracted. The front curtain can be eliminated, as well as the plastered back wall. If there are blackboards at the back of the classroom, these can be covered with a back curtain when not in use. Lighting can be simpler, and if necessary the lighting box can be eliminated. The cupboards can be constructed by the students with the material on hand. A costume and property drive carried out in the community would result in few costumes or materials having to be purchased.

What is essential is that there be a place for acting—for acting intimately to small groups, which is very necessary in the early stage of the work, and that as far as possible some of the trappings of the theatre be available to lend color to the work—simple spotlights, suggestive costumes, curtains that can be adapted to a variety of uses, suggesting walls, doors, windows, trees, pillars (or even curtains).

Undoubtedly our teachers will have to be trained to make use of this set-up. The present superficial attitude towards the theatre will be entirely out of place. Teachers will have to be able at least to act a bit themselves and understand what they are teaching. They must have enough imagination

textures, patterns and colors in lengths of 2 to 3½ yards. These materials need not be cut (except for the occasional slit for head); they could be adapted by pinning and trimming. Also desirable would be a collection of trimming materials: laces, ribbons and remnants.

3. Properties: such items as vases, purses, dishes, etc., which can be all collected by the students.

4. Make-up: by using only the basic colors and mixing them as a painter does on his palette, the classroom need only stock the following basic materials: Leichner nos. 1½, 4½, 5, 7, 9, 20, carmine III, as well as grey, lake and dark blue liners; crepe hair of various colors; Chinese brushes; powder; cold cream (or mineral oil or shortening) tooth picks; pipe cleaners and paper tissue.

5. Masks: a collection of student-constructed papier mache masks would be a worthwhile addition. These could be used for experimental make-up as well as for acting exercises.

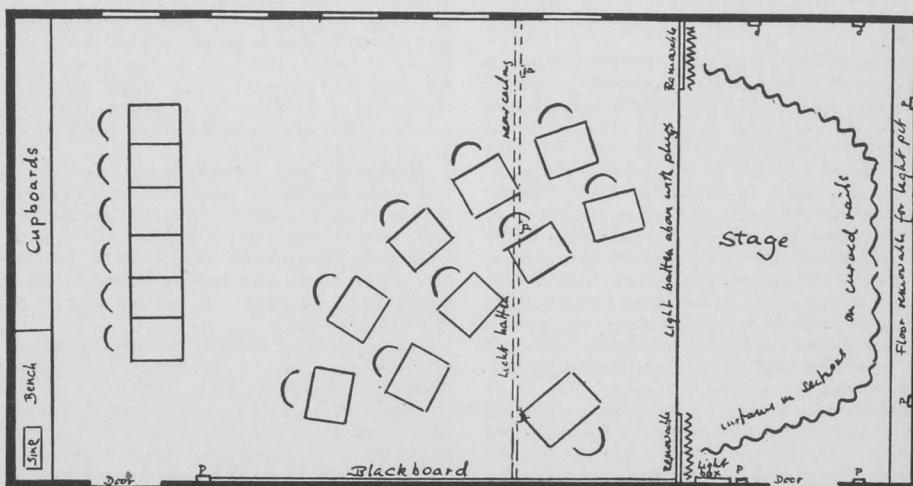
6. A Phonograph is essential. This could be shared with the music department.

7. An iron and sewing machine, which could be shared with the Household Economics classes.

and sensitivity to show their pupils how to develop their own capabilities. These teachers must know all about the various techniques of improvisation and how to carry such work over into the acting of scenes that have been already written. They must be able to teach simple, unaffected pantomime, particularly rhythmic pantomime, and know how to inculcate a sensitivity to speech rhythms and word music in verse and prose. This is the core of the work in dramatics. There are besides the crafts of lighting, scenery, make-up and costumes. But as has been pointed out, these are the frame-work of dramatics and only become the most important elements in class work when the teacher does not understand the real nature of the theatre.

Our Canadian theatre of tomorrow is to quite a large extent in the hands of our young people and their teachers. When this teaching is sound both as education and as theatre we can look for surprising developments in the popularization of the better kinds of theatre. But we have a long way to go, and only some of the difficulties have been indicated in this article. We hope it has been sufficiently provocative to set some people thinking and to argue with our statements or confirm them. It is for this reason that we have provided a questionnaire below. We hope a number of people will send us their answers and comments, however frank. They will serve as the basis for a future article in "Western Theatre". Our purpose is to help to find a way of raising the standard of dramatic training in the school to a serious and worthwhile level. The answers to this questionnaire will be treated with the utmost confidence, and names or places will not be published unless the sender so authorizes.

1. Could you set up a workshop-classroom such as the above in your school? If not, why not?
2. How do you think your school authorities would react to such a plan?
3. Have you met with any obstacles in attempting to give dramatic training in your school?
4. Do you think that the above plan is feasible? Have you any suggestions for improvement?
5. Do you think that the teaching of dramatics in the school suffers because of a lack of training on the part of the teacher?
6. Further comments?



## Costume Notes

IRENE CRAIG

### 1—DESIGNING COSTUMES

**The Setting**—First of all, study the play and know what the setting is to be, then work out the costume in accordance with the design of the setting.

**Period**—The period in which the action takes place settles the style. For classical dress there is such an excellent article on the subject in the Encyclopaedia Britannica; we need look no farther. Besides the study of costume the study of furniture is also recommended as they are so closely linked together.

A student of history can always spot the period as the morals of the time affect dress. During the great religious age maternity was holy; so the lady of the period pulled her dress through her girdle in front assuming the exalted attitude of motherhood. The Elizabethan age was straight-laced and tight-laced. The period of James I being not so chaste, women cut their bodices low showing bare breasts. This bold lady slashed her skirt too, to show her embroidered petticoat. The Victorians admired shoulders.

**Hour and Season**—When studying the play note the hour in which the action takes place and the season. Unless there is a reason for it, evening dress or lighted lamps in the morning don't make sense and actually, wearing the same diamond patterned socks in scenes which take place ten years apart has been known to happen. Watch it. Check wrist watches and nail polish as well as accessories.

**Locality**—We should be able to recognize the play geographically by the silhouette of the players, even before they speak.

**Class**—The important station in life is portrayed by the more important velvet or fur, just as the man of humble occupation wears more modest material. This does not mean that velvet must be velvet. All that the material needs to do is look the part. With the help of lighting dyed Canton flannel supplies the necessary richness of appearance as it falls gracefully into folds.

**Fashion**—Fashions follow reigning monarchs. Elizabeth was long waisted so everyone else appeared to be long waisted. Victoria showed her shoulders so everyone's sleeves slipped off to show them. Through the ages the hair parting dates the period. Study coins.

**Mood**—In designing costumes, creating the mood is most important of all. As we respond to color unconsciously it is easy to see the mood is achieved not only by the design of a costume but by the personality of the color that predominates.

The white robe of an angel suggests purity. The burlesque spirit is brought out in the accepted garment of the clown. Heavy shades are not for fairies.

Materials also, are important factors in expressing mood. Taffeta does nicely for the perky Young Thing but however transparent, Cleopatra could never be at ease in a stiff net. Color, the line of the silhouette formed by the cutting and the texture are what tell the tale.

**Color and Character**—Remember that colors have personalities and intelligent use of them can portray a decline from glory to obscurity as inevitably as do the words. "Prunella" is an example; in her grey gown in the last act she returns, disillusioned. In "Beyond the Horizon" the girl starts out gaily in a pink sash, ending with a drab shawl clutched around her shoulders.

As a child reaches for his red blocks first because our eye muscles react first to red, so red is not for unimportant characters. Sometimes to attract attention in a crowd scene the exhibitionist sticks a red feather in his hat, even a small one. We need hardly mention that red and yellow, the warm colors are called "advancing colors" and blue and green "receding colors."

A collection of neutral colors is like a gathering of very dull people. This shows at once the emotional value of color. Use some black and white to sharpen it, though overdone it may be overpowering.

**Bold designs**—Make your design as bold as possible. At a distance the finest embroideries and delicate jewels are lost. In the same way one's own features disappear and make-up has to be employed. A brooch made of beans glued on to the cover of a tin can and painted is a most effective ornament if brilliants are added. It's surprising too, what can be done with gum-drops and jelly beans.

**Harmony and convenience** — Period costumes should be beautiful and suitable rather than accurate. Aim for suggestion and effect. General effect is all that is necessary. Keep the design, both in line and color all in one key and on the same scale. Each character is merely a part of the same picture.

Avoid choppy designs, or arrangement, in placing (or in choosing) different dresses in the same play. The color of the women's dresses that appear at the same time must be carefully chosen. Remember proportion. A top-heavy head dress may become a worry to the audience as well as to the wearer. This insecurity destroys empathy.

## 2—MAKING COSTUMES

**Dyeing**—Apply the same idea as the paisley pattern to dyeing. Keep the effect uneven rather than flat. When dyeing materials make use of two shades for depth. To set the dye use three tablespoons of salt to a gallon of water. If the dye still has a tendency to rub off add  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of acetic acid to every gallon of water. Dyed factory cotton is indispensable for many purposes. Dyeing the material fills the pores and the more often it is dyed the better it looks.

**Materials**—If you do not intend to dye a material choose one that is without dressing or the lights will show its cheapness. Texture is all-important. Use cotton crepe, Canton flannel, voile, cheesecloth, etc., rather than a springy texture for best results.

To get rid of dressing boil the material. Good results are often come by if the material is soaked and not ironed. On the other hand if you wish to paint on a design leave in the dressing. It makes a base. For such painting sometimes black is a nuisance. When mixed with glue and boiling water dry lamp black will not float on the top if a few drops of shellac are added to the mixture.

Never be stuck for elaborate material. Paint designs of your own such as plaids or large patterns. These may be stencilled. For this use powdered glue, powdered paint, boiling water and a drop or so of glycerine to soften the material or the result will be too stiff. Occasionally add powdered gold, silver, red or green for effect. To make it glitter still more, sprinkle sparklers on loosely, the fewer the better, so that they catch the light.

**Armour**—To make armour use knubbly knitted things or coarse mop-cloth. Wring an old sweater out in a glue solution and blow powdered paint on it. Grey or brown powder, or sometimes dull blue does the trick if you remember to keep it uneven. The armour cap may be treated in the same way. For this use an old felt hat after taking off the brim. Bowler hats (brimless) with ear pieces attached and whisk broom crests make fine Roman helmets. (Also insides of U.S. army helmets—Ed.)

**Miscellaneous articles**—Tights should never be dyed in the paler shades. They should be woollen, not cotton. A yokel's legs are wrapped and tied with twine.

For leather jackets use hessian or cotton dyed and wrung. Don't iron. Factory cotton and wire make 17th century hats. Go about it as you would any other hat; cut out and machine stitch. Finally, paint them and dry on a greased upturned flowerpot to shape them. Then add feather plumes made of wool fastened to mesh wire feather-bone. The 17th century collars are raised at the neck on a piece of belting. Study old paintings for effect. For the lace

use tarleton well lacquered and white cotton cut out with scissors for embroidery. Lace stands up nicely if reinforced with pipe cleaners.

Shoes should not only be suitable in appearance but suitable for poise. One's walk must match one's clothes. Short steps for a period gown. For out of door scenes muffle the heels. In Shakespearian plays socks may be rolled down over bedroom slippers. Sandals are easily made with insoles and colored tape for fastenings.

Watch for gloves being omitted. Men always wear gloves with armour and also in Shakespearian plays. For such plays use washers gilded and sparkled for chains and lockets. Make them large to show.

Cut cloaks in a circle. Bias falls better. And to assist cutting a soft material, keep a can of boiling water beside you in which to dip the scissors. Be generous in cutting cloaks and sleeves. Stingy cutting shows no shadows. Remember light affects all colors. Be fearless in combining.

**The Workshop**—Make a clothes line or build racks on which to hang costumes in the workroom. To systematise the hanging, "Finished", "To be painted", "To be fitted", etc., is a great help in a large production.

If you make your own cutting table make it at least three feet high to avoid aching backs. A scrap box marked "this show" under the table saves unnecessary sorting for trimmings. Often the people who sort the costumes are not familiar with the characters in the play. Label each costume, and with the wearer's name also. Label everything. Shoes, gloves, belts and all. It saves one's sanity with a large cast. Print names with typewriter on strip of white cotton and clip. Cheaper than tape.

## 3—WEARING COSTUMES

**Rehearsals**—If a long skirt or any unaccustomed style is to be worn, practice with something of the same sort at rehearsal. Learn to wear costumes. They are clothes in harmony with the play and character, on as well as off. Keep skirts long rather than short. If long, the longer the better for grace. Hems should always be put in by hand.

Insist on a clothes rehearsal before the dress rehearsal, with the designer present. It is wise to have several others make notes, and compare later for errors in shoes, etc.

We don't want to appear contradictory, but stage costumes above all things are not just costumes: they are clothes, and must be worn as if the wearer lived in them. A player conscious of his apparel destroys aesthetic distance faster than anything else he may do. Keep in the "magic circle".

The final test for every costume is that it should be able to walk across the stage and portray the character all by itself.

## MANITOBA

### UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

"STUDENT PRODUCTIONS" is one of the many Manitoba University Dramatic Society outlets for campus talent, affording students extra opportunities in the various activities of the theatre. On November 4th and 5th at Convocation Hall in United College, Student Productions presented two plays which were all received by a capacity audience. The first play, "Parting at Imsdorf" by N. Richard Nossbaum was ably directed by Bob Gardiner, assisted by Patricia Beatty. In the second play, "The Rope" by Eugene O'Neill, the characters were exceptionally well sustained. Ted Johns and Margaret Bonnar directed.

In January, United College held a Theatre Night in the convocation hall of the College. One of the highlights was a student written drama "The Night and Then the Dark", written by James Downey, a fourth years Arts student, and directed by Barry McCorquodale. A number of brief but hilarious selections from "Le Medecin Malgre Lui" by Moliere were directed by Dr. Leathers of the Faculty, who also played the role of Sganarelle, his daughter Miss Patricia Leathers contributing a ballet solo which was one of the features of the play. This could well have been called "Variety" night as Moliere was followed by "The Patchwork Quilt" directed by Douglas Parker and Miss Donna Munroe, and to conclude the evening a presentation of "Make Room for Rodney" directed by Charles Huband. The students hope to have another theatre night later in the season.

### MANITOBA DRAMA LEAGUE

Interest in drama in the rural districts has increased immeasurably since the League reorganized following cessation of the war, and this year the response is most heartening. Two or three of the larger districts, such as Carman and Morden have very enthusiastic drama clubs and are producing both one and three act plays. Carman Drama Club following its success with "Night of January 15th" is now rehearsing another three acter as well as preparing one-act plays for the Provincial Festival. Morden Drama Club has produced several one-act plays and is now rehearsing "Out of the Frying Pan," and hoping to hold a district festival there if sufficient entries can be secured from nearby towns. Manitou is also very active and is combining with Pilot Mound district to hold a festival at the latter point early in May. Inquiries are arriving from other

points regarding district festivals. These take place towards the end of April and throughout May, with the Provincial Finals held early in June. This year, Carman is to be host for the finals. They have a very good hall, seating about 500, and as it is within easy motoring distance of Winnipeg they are hoping for a good representation of out-of-town drama enthusiasts at the Festival.

### WINNIPEG LITTLE THEATRE

The first production this season was "Reunion in Vienna" directed by J. M. Sinclair. This was followed by "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" directed by Professor G. L. Brodersen. Immediately following the Regional Festival "Our Town" was most effectively presented. This was directed by Moray Sinclair who will be remembered for his work with "The Masquers" in the past. The audience's reaction was excellent and it was generally felt that this production was one of the highlights of the Little Theatre since its reorganization in 1948. Rehearsals are now under way for "The Dover Road" by A. A. Milne. It was originally intended to end the season with "Man and Superman", but in view of the need for economy and popular appeal, it was decided that "The Dover Road" would be done instead.

Several Members' Nights have been held throughout the winter. The Theatre is hampered by not having club rooms in which these experimental nights can be given. It has been using the auditorium of the General Wolfe School. On November 24th the Grade 10 students of St. John's College School staged Lister Sinclair's "All About Emily", and the University students repeated "Parting at Imsdorf" which had been previously presented at Varsity night. The last studio night of the year was held at Rupert's Land School on March 20th, with a reading of Auden and Isherwood's verse play "The Ascent of F 6", special music by Chester Duncan.

### SWAN RIVER VALLEY

From Winnipeg it takes approximately fourteen hours by rail to reach the town of Swan River and the most northerly members of the Manitoba Drama League. Notwithstanding this considerable distance from a big centre, a busier or more friendly place would be difficult to find. In Manitoba during the war years, this District alone, held the torch for rural festival work, carrying on through difficulties which discouraged the older and larger districts. Working under the adverse con-

ditions of very small stages—just platforms in most towns—and no facilities for lighting and backstage work, their goal was to some day have a Community Hall with a stage on which they could spread themselves literally and experiment theatrically. Last year this goal was reached. In the Spring of 1949, the Legion of Swan River erected a large community hall, and in planning the stage, they in true community spirit, sought and used the advice and experience of the local drama groups.

Although not yet fully completed, the expansion under the incentive of improved working conditions has been amazing. One striking example in their recent Festival was a complete and very effective backdrop for one of the plays. This was doubly interesting when it was learned that it was painted by a local artist on paper salvaged from the railway box cars used for transporting salt.

In 1949 they also ventured further afield and covered themselves with well deserved glory by organizing for the first time a High School section. Three plays were presented in this class, and the young people gave a good account of themselves dramatically. The winner was "Let's Make Up", a very well directed little comedy from the small town of Bowsman. Bill Polson, a High School pupil, was the director.

In the adult class four plays were entered. The Canadian play "Balm" by Merrill Denison, presented by the Swan River town group and directed by Mrs. Wilfred Lamb won the Festival. Later this play was entered in the Provincial Festival held in Brandon in June, where the group took the following awards: Manitoba Free Press Shield for the winning play; trophy for best performance of a Canadian play in the Festival; award for best performance by an actress. This latter prize was divided between Mrs. Esme Vellacott and Mrs. Martha Griffen. The Adjudicator Mr. Frank Morrissey, Drama Critic of the Winnipeg Free Press, said he could not decide between them, both being equally good (excellent was the word he used.) Mrs. W. Beeman in a very good portrayal of the

social worker rounded out this well balanced production. The Manitoba Drama League think that all the Swan River Festival District has accomplished, is a perfect example of community effort and ingenuity, and is highly commendable.

#### SCHOOL NEWS

The place of drama in the English program of Manitoba junior and senior high schools has long been a theme for discussion and even heated argument wherever English teachers have gathered to discuss their work. While most teachers of English subscribed to the principle that "Plays were written not to be studied in the classroom but to be acted" (Program of Studies, Manitoba), many maintained that the time factor rendered this impossible. As a result, drama often remained the forgotten stepchild. Following the introduction of the revised curriculum in English, the English Teachers' Club sponsored a festival of one-act plays at the Playhouse Theatre in November, 1947. Plays from the school text "On Stage" were taken out of their classroom settings and presented behind the footlights for the experience and enjoyment of the students. This first production was followed by a similar one in April, 1949, and by a third in October, 1949. In all, seven different schools, including two junior high schools and a suburban collegiate have presented eight different plays, of which seven were on courses of study. Such well-known vehicles as J. M. Barrie's "Shall We Join the Ladies?", Norman McKinnel's "The Bishop's Candlesticks" and Hall and Middlemass's "The Valiant" were performed alongside Sidney Box's "Fantastic Flight" and Harold Brighouse's "The Price of Coal." These festivals were non-competitive, but private adjudications given each year by Mr. Robert Jarman in his own delightful and sympathetic manner did much to stimulate those who participated. Presentations were of consistently high calibre and audience appreciation was always keen. The several committees in charge have to some extent kindled the dramatic fire in a new generation of students.

## SASKATCHEWAN

#### SCHOOL NEWS

"The Unseen", a one-act play, presented by Eastend High School and directed by Peter Jaenicke won the McCool cup, the provincial trophy in the high school drama festival finals held Wednesday, March 22nd, in the Technical Collegiate, Saskatoon, before one thousand school trustees in annual session. "The Valiant" performed by the Lanigan High School, under the direction of Miss Guryl Eskelson, was

the runner-up and winner of the northern semi-finals. Volumes of plays were presented to all participants in the finals.

As a curtain riser to this program a creative drama "Aunt Polly's Tea Party", an adaptation from Tom Sawyer, was dramatized and presented by Grades 3 and 4 of Perdue Public School under the supervision of Mrs. Florence Curtis, teacher—a sample of the work being done in many public schools in this province. Mr.

Michael Meiklejohn, Physical Fitness Office, Dept. of National Health and Welfare, Ottawa, was the adjudicator. He stated that all the work presented was of a very high standard and a credit to the drama teachers in the province of Saskatchewan.

In the overall picture about three hundred schools were registered this year with the Saskatchewan Recreation Movement drama office, of which one hundred and forty were public schools. Approximately ninety groups presented plays in competitive festivals, through home festivals in December with the winners going into local festivals (two or three neighboring communities) in January, then these winners proceeded to zone festivals in February with the winners from the fourteen zones meeting in Saskatoon and Regina on March 20th and 21st to determine who should represent their areas in the finals.

In addition about eighty casts have participated in non-competitive festivals with eight festivals still to be held before the close of school. In all, approximately 3,000 students have participated in festival presentations, before approximately 18,000 spectators. This record puts the work of high school drama festivals in this province in the category of big business and a public service which is not to be equalled by any other similar body in the Dominion or even perhaps on the continent.

Four students who competed in Saskatchewan high school festivals this year have now been asked to indicate whether or not they will be able to each accept a one hundred dollar scholarship awarded by

Radio Station CKCK which will enable them to continue their studies in drama at an accredited school or university, either in regular or summer sessions. The selection was not necessarily made by the Advisory committee and adjudicators on the basis of best performance but on potentialities for further dramatic development. As soon as negotiations are completed, names will be announced.

Mr. Meiklejohn, National Physical Fitness Office, Dept. of National Health and Welfare, Ottawa, was the official adjudicator for the High School final drama competition held in Saskatoon, March 22nd. While in this province he contacted many drama groups and was the guest of the Regina Little Theatre executive at a dinner meeting while in that city.

Superintendencies of Kipling, Blaine Lake, Lasburn and others are holding non-competitive festivals this spring in which both public and high school groups will compete. Meadow Lake staged, as a first effort, an eight session festival in which eight high school plays and twenty-four public school plays were presented before Mrs. D. L. Olson, Saskatoon, adjudicator. Constructive criticism, basic techniques and choice of good plays were discussed in the private session which followed each performance. Superintendent K. W. Bentley and his committee feel that an excellent start had been made and that no placing of groups for the first year or two was a definite step in the right direction, since everyone received much encouragement for their efforts and went home with a determination to do better next time.

## ALBERTA

### UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The annual inter-year one-act play festival was not held this year. It had been decided to change it into an inter-faculty festival, but this did not receive sufficient support. In its place the Drama Division produced "The Antigone" of Sophocles in translation, acted by students and directed by Robert Orchard.

The Summer Session is offering a special course in Children's Theatre for teachers, recreational leaders and others, as well as the usual courses in Acting, Speech, Directing and Stagecraft. These are being held in the Studio Theatre and Workshops. The instructors are Jack Medhurst of the Toronto Children's Theatre, Leona Paterson, speech specialist from Calgary and Robert Orchard.

### PROVINCIAL PLAYERS

Once more the Provincial Players are going on tour. The company is composed of six student actors from the University

of Alberta. The production consists of three one-acts by Robertson Davies: "Eros at Breakfast", "Overlaid", and "The Voice of the People" under the direction of Gordon Atkinson who has returned to Alberta since his graduation from the Pasadena Playhouse. The tour will open on May 25th and close in Banff on July 11th, coinciding with the opening of the Banff School of Fine Arts.

### COMMUNITY GROUPS

Many drama groups in the province have been doing short tours this season in an effort to broaden their experience and their budget. The Parkland Players, the Stavely Community Players, the Medicine Hat Civic Theatre and the Sedgewick Drama Club have each played four or more towns. The Sedgewick group produced more than money. One of the plays they took on tour was written by one of their own members, Mrs. James Walsh. Her first play showed promise and we hope to see more of her work next season.

Something down-to-earth in organization is shown by the new club formed in **Peace River**. They are spending their first season studying production problems and the technical aspects of theatre in preparation for their first production next year.

Spring Productions: **Edmonton Community Theatre**, "Jason"; **Western Canada High** in Calgary, "The Taming of the Shrew" in modern dress.

#### DEPARTMENT OF EXTENSION

Several drama workshop classes have been arranged this spring under the auspices of the Department of Extension. The most successful of these was the 3-day Workshop organized in Raymond by Mrs. Elodia Christensen, Stake Drama Director for that area. Theatre workers from three towns met in Raymond for afternoon and

evening classes in theatre organization, directing, acting, lighting, make-up, and stagecraft. In addition, practical assistance was given on two plays in rehearsal and adjudications were given on two finished productions. Overall attendance for the course was 150. Instructor for the course: Esther Nelson, Extension Drama Supervisor. A great deal of credit is due Mrs. Christensen for her outstanding contribution to drama in the Raymond area. Her successful organization of the Workshop could well be an inspiration to all other groups in the province.

A large number of one-act play festivals have been held during the past winter and spring. There is every indication that next year the Alberta Drama League will be able to re-organize the Provincial One-Act Festival.

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

#### UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Two interesting U.B.C. productions were presented to the public this year. In January, the English Department, in conformity with its policy of presenting each year a great play of the past or of the present, produced Ernst Toller's expressionistic masterpiece "Masses and Man". Forty students under the direction of Dorothy Somerset staged the play in an all-black setting on a permanent set of steps and platforms, with special lighting effects. The impact of the play on the audience was most exciting: no one remained indifferent and most were startled and profoundly moved. For those working on the production, it was an experience they will never forget. The English Department's plans for next year are already under way—it hopes to present on a modified Elizabethan stage Ben Jonson's "The Alchemist".

The other production was the U.B.C. Players' Club annual spring play. This year they chose to do J. B. Priestley's "An Inspector Calls", under the direction of Sydney Risk. Cliff Robinson designed the very interesting set. The acting was of a high quality and the production was well-received by the audiences. An interesting controversy centered around the play itself. Most people admitted that the actual writing of the play left a good deal to be desired, and yet they acknowledged that as a production it gripped and held the audience. The good acting helped, undoubtedly, but the problem was to define the qualities in the play that made it the good theatre it proved to be. Following its usual custom the Players' Club will take the play on tour immediately upon the conclusion of examinations. The tour will

be interrupted while the director, Sydney Risk, and two members of the cast go to Calgary to compete in the Dominion Drama Festival in their production of "Noah" by Andre Obey.

#### U.B.C. SUMMER SCHOOL OF THE THEATRE

The University of British Columbia will have as guest director of its Summer School of the Theatre, for the second year, Robert Gill of Hart House Theatre, Toronto. With him will be associated Dorothy Somerset, Sydney Risk, Cliff Robinson, Jessie Richardson and other instructors. As usual, students of the school will present two major productions as part of the Festival of the Arts which is offered to the public at the conclusion of the summer session. A special feature of the school this summer will be a series of lecture demonstrations on children's creative dramatics, to be given by Miss Fay Ortmans, whose children's programs over the air and children's classes in Vancouver are creating a great deal of interest.

#### VAGABOND PLAYERS

New Westminster's Vagabond Players are looking back, with a comfortable feeling of accomplishment, on a season just ending. In that season, the Vagabonds have produced a very successful run of Noel Coward's "Blithe Spirit", a colorful and also successful festival production of "Pappa Is All", and as this periodical goes to press, has entered the William Saroyan play "Hello Out There" in the One-Act Festival. And in the same season, the Vagabonds have increased their membership by about 300%.

"Pappa Is All" was a unique choice for the festival. The stage crew, led by Tom Parminter, looked upon their assignment

as a special challenge. And with infinite care and patience, and hard work, produced a set that was praised by the adjudicator as "the finest set I have ever seen on an amateur stage." Vic Fergie as Jake, in "Pappa Is All", brought to the Vagabonds their fifth award in three seasons, as he was declared "best male actor". Vic is also tackling the extremely difficult lead male role in "Hello Out There", in the One-Act Festival. Playing opposite Vic Fergie is Freda Springate whose delicate performance adds to a very enjoyable production.

The Vagabonds sponsored an experimental studio night early in April, and the very gratifying response predicts a repeat performance in the very near future. The greatest difficulty being, as always, lack of an adequate stage. At the studio night, the emphasis was placed on new members of the Vagabonds, many of whom had never been on a stage before. And on the same evening, a premiere was given to an exciting and fast-moving mystery written by Tom Parminter. Many excellent performances were noted at the studio night, as promising newcomers got their chance. And speaking of newcomers, the Vagabonds are especially proud of Mildred Franklin, who, in her first season with them, made a hit as Madame Arcati, came right back as the gabby Mrs. Yoder in "Pappa Is All," and is now a promising prospect for Vancouver's Theatre Under the Stars.

#### VANCOUVER LITTLE THEATRE

Two Canadian premieres in one season by an amateur theatrical organization must be something of a record, but that is what will have happened in the Vancouver Little Theatre world when May 19th comes around. May 19th is the closing date of the last production of the 1949-50 season, and that last production will be "Born Yesterday" by Garson Kanin, finally released to V.L.T. This play is now in rehearsal under the direction of Ian Dobbie, and is due to play at the York Theatre May 15th to 19th.

Just finished playing, is the North American premiere of Noel Coward's latest play, "Peace In Our Time", which, as the fifth production in a scheduled program of a season of six plays, was shown at the York Theatre from March 27th to April 1st. "Peace In Our Time" received exceptional praise from the critics for its direction by Ian Dobbie, and for the acting and the set.

The first play in the New Year was "Love From A Stranger" by Frank Vosper, directed by Doris Owen.

The "Romance Of The Willow Pattern" by Ethel Beekman Van der Veer was chosen from the last set of one-act plays appearing in Studio Production to be entered in the Greater Vancouver One-Act Play Festival. The next Studio Production,

contrary to usual procedure, will be a three-act play. Mrs. Phoebe Smith will direct "Ladies Of The Jury" by Fred Ballard. With a cast of 22 the play gives an opportunity to many young people in the organization who have not yet been in a major production. "Ladies Of The Jury" will play on May 4th, 5th, 6th. All V.L.T.A. members are allowed into Studio Productions free on presentation of membership cards. Friends are charged a small fee at the door.

#### GREATER VANCOUVER AND LOWER MAINLAND ONE-ACT PLAY FESTIVAL

This festival, sponsored by the Community Arts Council and under the auspices of the Community Drama Branch, Department of Education, Victoria, runs from April 21st to 27th. The festival is under the chairmanship of Miss Nora Gibson, with Mr. James McGrath, of Victoria, as adjudicator. Entries are: "High Window", Holy Rosary CYO; "The Romance Of The Willow Pattern", Vancouver Little Theatre; "The House In Fern Road", West Vancouver Little Theatre; "Les Trois Masques", La Troupe Moliere; "The Lovely Miracle", White Rock Players; "Hello, Out There", Vagabond Players; "Othello", Act 5, Scene 2, Lambrett-Smith Players; "A Marriage Proposal", Triangle Players; "Eyes That Cannot See", South Hill Community Theatre; "White Iris", Vancouver Repertory Theatre; "George", Sea Island Players; "At Liberty", B.C. Theatrical Guild; "Dust Of The Road", Mission Drama Club; "The Boor", Valleyview Community Centre Players; "Senor Freedom", George Derby Players. One play will be chosen from this festival to be presented at the final festival of the Community Drama Branch of the Department of Education to be held in Victoria the following week.

#### LA TROUPE MOLIERE

A cosmopolitan touch was given the Greater Vancouver and Lower Mainland One-Act Festival with the entry of La Troupe Moliere, "Les Trois Masques" by Charles Mere. This group has given ten productions since its organization four years ago by Blanche Lambert, a former Edmontonian. Mrs. Lambert was for many years an active member of Edmonton's Cercle Moliere, Edmonton Civic Opera Society and the Edmonton Community Theatre.

#### PUPPETS

John Conway, who recently toured the States with the Royal Canadian Puppet Ballet, is taking his own puppet show on tour through Vancouver Island, Fraser Valley, Okanagan and the Caribou. The show is performed on a stage 9 feet high and 10 feet wide, made of aluminum tubing. Mr. Conway uses handpuppets which he makes himself.

(Continued from Page 31)

that scene where the dove comes back. This chorus work is very difficult and we're going to have to do an awful lot of work on it. Start, Noah, where the dove flies down into your hands . . .

\* \* \*

NARRATOR: And then at last it was the night before the festival production of "Noah".

RISK: Well, that's our last rehearsal. You've seen the plays this week and you know just as I do what stiff competition we have. If we don't win the Hamber Award don't be too discouraged. After all, we didn't enter the Festival to win. The Everyman just likes putting on plays. Though we haven't a chance of winning the Festival, still put all you've got into "Noah" tomorrow . . . give it your best.

NARRATOR: On the final night of the Festival the theatre was packed, standing room only. Everyone in the theatre was tense. Which play would win?

VOICES: "The Winslow Boy" has it for sure. . . . No, it's "Candida" . . . I'm betting on "The Little Foxes". . . . What about tonight's play, "Noah"? . . . Not a chance in the world; they're just a bunch of kids. . . . Imagine a nineteen-year-old playing Noah!

\* \* \*

NARRATOR: At the end of the first act of "Noah", though, the audience wasn't so sure. In the intermission people were saying:

VOICES: Say, quite a play this "Noah" . . . Those kids are doing a good job . . . I don't like it. . . . What's it all about anyway. . . . Hasn't a chance. . . . I wouldn't be too sure . . .

NARRATOR: By the end of the last act there were many in the audience who felt that perhaps "Noah" had a chance. It all depended on whether you liked the play or not. Some people did, some didn't. But almost everyone agreed the Everyman Theatre had put on a good show. They had infected "Noah" with their own vigorous enthusiasm.

VOICES: There's the adjudicator now! There's Mr. Wray! He's going down the aisle! We'll soon know!

NARRATOR: And now the moment is here, the moment the seven groups have been waiting for ever since they decided to enter a play in the Dominion Drama Festival.

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